No. 199 • February, 1992 • $3.95 ($4.75 Can.)

AMAZING HEROES

ORIGINAL *BATMAN II* SCRIPT
Dissected by Andy Mangels

VALIANT EFFORTS
Shooter, Magnus, Shadowman & Friends Take on the Big Two

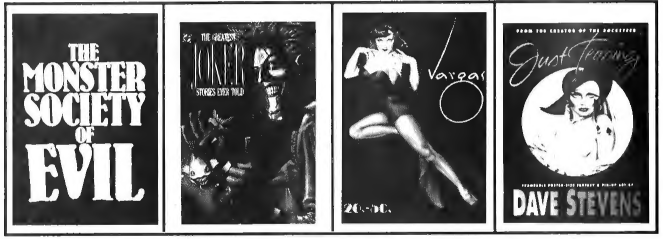
FREDDY KRUEGER's True Origin

Cartoonist ROBERTA GREGORY

MAUS
Reviewed by Adam-Troy Castro

BUD PLANT COMIC ART

Free 160-page color catalog!



Here are some of our best Bargain Books:

Capt. Marvel & The Monster Society of Evil Enormous all-color hardcover reprints all 25 chapters of the 1940s story from *Capt. Marvel Adventures*. Limited Edition of 3000, slipcase, 10x14, 240 pages. Published at $135.00. *Comic Art Exclusive!* **$69.95**

Comic Strip Showcase #2: Polly & Her Pals Complete daily strips from 1931. Was $13.95. **Now $4.95**

Eclipse Graphic Novel Set An incredible $53.75 value: *Somerset Holmes, Sacred and Profane, Sisterhood of Steel, Silverheels, Zorro in Old California.* **All five books $9.95**

Fighting American by Simon & Kirby. Complete collection of #1-7. Deluxe Marvel hardcover. Was: $36. **Now $19.95**

The Golden Age of Children's Book Illustration Art & biographies of 50 artists: Pyle, Rackham, Detmold, Dulac, etc. 150 illustrations. Hardcover. **Special Price: $10.98**

Greatest Joker Stories Ever Told 19 tales beginning with *Batman #1*. All-color. DC. Was $14.95. **Now $8.95**

Hawkman by Gardner Fox & Joe Kubert. His first 9 adventures from 1961-62 *Brave and the Bold*. Was $19.95. **Now $11.95**

Last Voyage of Sinbad by Richard Corben & Jan Strnad. Arabian Nights Corben-style. Mature Readers. Was $14.95. **Now $6.95**

Making Ghostbusters with Berni Wrightson. Complete script, Wrightson drawings, thick. Was $12.95. **Now $5.95**

Mickey Mouse Movie Stories 12 stories adapted from 1932-34 cartoons, using original cels. Wonderful. Hardcover. Was $19.95. **Now $5.98**

Silent Invasion Set by Cherkas & Hancock. A 1950's flying saucer invasion! Four 80-page books. Frank Miller intro. Was $37.80. **Now $19.95**

Squeak the Mouse and **Supersweet Set** by Mattioli. Famous violent *Tom & Jerry* parody seized by U.S. customs. Two hardcovers. Mature Readers. Was: $23.90. **Now $9.90**

Storm, the Last Fighter Set by Don Lawrence. Great sci-fi series, Book 1 & 2. Import, full color. Was $16.90. **Now $8.95**

Superman Archives Vol 1 Collects issues 1-4 in a deluxe hardcover. Special intros. DC. Was $39.95. **Now $24.95**

Unseen America The Greatest Cult Exploitation Magazines 1950-1966. 350 photos and text about each wild, weird and sexy mag. Mature Readers. Was $11.95. **Now $5.95**

Valerian Set by Mezieres & Christin. Steranko and Gil Kane love this series. 4 full color novels of sci-fi adventure. Was $27.80. **Now $11.95**

Vargas 20s to the 50s Full color collection. Mature Readers. **Special Price: $9.95**

Zorro Book 1 by Alex Toth. Ten stories from 1957-59 Dell comics. Great! Was $9.95. **Now $2.95**

PRINT SPECIALS:

The Shadow Ablaze Print Signed & numbered by Michael Kaluta. Wonderful, large color print. Was $45.00. **Now $21.00**

A Bad Night for Ninjas by Jim Lee. Set of 2 prints with Punisher & Wolverine. Together they are 4 feet wide! Signed & numbered. Was $95.00. **Now $45.00**

REGULAR-PRICE BOOKS:

Just Teasing: The Pin-Up Art of Dave Stevens Oversize posterbook with Dave's best, plus two new pieces. **$14.95.** [Signed & numbered hardcover, already OP: $45.00]

From Aargh! to Zap! by Harvey Kurtzman. All-color visual history of comics: great covers and page art. **$24.95** [S&N HC: $49.95-call for status).

Over 3000 titles in stock! New and out-of-print. **Art Books - Graphic Novels - Sale Books - Adult Comics - Limited Editions - Videos**

Learn why both collectors and creators depend on us for the finest in comic art--as well as art books on all top illustrators of yesterday and today.

All the books from today's best: Giger, Moebius, Kaluta, Robert Williams, Olivia, Crepax, Manara, Corben, Burne Hogarth, Crumb, Eisner, etc.

Classic strips: EC & Barks Libraries, Prince Valiant, Little Nemo, Krazy Kat, Flash Gordon, etc.

Art books: Pyle, Wyeth, Varga, Parrish, Krenkel, Mucha, Rackham, Doré, How-to-Draw books, etc.

We ship fast. And our careful packing gets every item to you in mint condition. Even our far-off overseas customers get their books in mint!

Call or FAX your order with Mastercard or Visa. FAX: 1-916-273-0915 anytime.

To order any items above by mail, include your name, address, payment, and $2.00 shipping. Calif. residents add 7.25% tax. For Mature Reader items, state you are over 18 and sign.

To order just a catalog, call or FAX your request and we'll send it ***free!*** Or by mail send $2 (Overseas: $2 surface, $6 Air Mail).

Phone 916-273-2166, Mon-Fri 9-5

Fast and Friendly Service for 22 Years!

Bud Plant Comic Art, PO Box 1689A, Grass Valley, CA 95945

EDITORIAL

The Super-Hero Myth: I'd like to revive the popular debate of whether super-heroes should be considered myths. I'm going to argue that they are, though this doesn't mean I think this necessarily makes them great literature.

The generally accepted definition of "myth" is "a purely fictitious narrative involving supernatural persons, actions, or events, and embodying some popular ideal concerning natural or historical phenomana." As far as I'm concerened, super-heroes make it on every count.

Super-heroes are 20th Century myths. While the average person knows very few super-heroes other than Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman, the super-hero is a true 20th century symbol.

One of the points of mythological heroes is that their acheivements outstrip anything that could be done in real life. Hercules, who has been revived as a 20th Century hero a couple of times, is the obvious example. But the 19th and 20th Centuries were times in which technology and industry outstripped almost anything that could be imagined by humans. If a human was fast, there was something that was faster. If a human was strong, there was a machine that was stronger. Stories like that of John Henry, who died in a race with the steam drill, represent the defeat of man by his own machines.

Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster's Superman, still the definitive super-hero, was invented as an answer to that. Siegel's famous decription of Superman as an Achilles with no heel reveals his basic appeal. If the gods of old were not enough to stand out in the industrial age, than better gods would have to be invented. Think about how that famous theme goes. "Faster than a speeding bullet. More powerful than a locomotive. Able to leap tall buildings in a single bound." It was not nature, but man's world that Superman was designed to surpass. Later super-heroes took to harnassing 20th century science. Look at all those Marvel heroes who got their powers from freak nuclear accidents.

Super-heroes, again led by Superman, also became a symbol of the American attitude. In the early days, the Man of Steel was slightly left wing, then he leaned to the right when World War II started, but his basic approach to problems was always the same. All Superman had to do was charge in and take command to set things right. Shoot bullets at him or charge him with a car, and he'd just stand there, his hands resting defiantly on his hips. If a train was about to run someone over, he wouldn't try to whisk the victim away in the manner of the old cliffhanger hero; he'd stop the train dead in its tracks and teach the iron bully a lesson. (I know it doesn't have much to do with what I'm discussing, but my favorite Sergio Aragones cartoon points out the obvious repercussions of doing this.)

I've always thought that this attitude was symbolic of the American right-ousness which generally confuses Europeans. A lot of them never completely understood our tendency to charge in and resolve what they see as slight issues. Watergate was a minor break-in, but its cover-up led to the first resignation of a president. A Supreme Court nominee was enthusiastically supported by conservatives until they learned he smoked marijuana *once*. Europeans might say, "What's the big deal," but no cause is too small to Americans if they're properly motivated.

Superman is generally understood to be a symbol of the U.S.A., especially of its economic and military might. At the height of Secretary of State Henry Kissenger's globetrotting career, he was inevitabley portrayed as a Superman with a "K" on his chest in place of the usual "S." It caricatured his many flights abroad, his boundless ambition, and his job representing the U.S.A, one of the "super powers." In the '80s, a Japanese farmer's association promoting tariffs on cheap American produce put out a cartoon showing a Japanese earth god repelling a flying Ronald Reagan garbed in super-hero clothes. For more American symbolism, look no further than Captain America.

Modern super-hero comics, aimed towards a specialized audience, include a lot of elements of soap opera, but the basic appeal of the genre is still what it was in the '40s. Invincible, colorfully garbed heroes using their powers to enforce morality. Sure, modern super-heroes spend less and less time fighting crime. The X-Men might spend a whole year just fighting to survive extermination, but even that is a fight for what's "right," the right to exist.

You may not think much of the Punisher's moral code (I don't), but it's there all right. I have a super-hero-hating acquaintance who likes Marshal Law. "He's not a hero," he says, repeating Pat Mills' description of the character, "he's a hero hunter." That's kind of like saying, "The Punisher isn't a criminal. He just kills criminals." Though *Marshal Law* is more satirical than the average super-hero, he's as moralistic as any of them, only in his case, what he enforces is an anti-super-hero morality.

I'm not going to say its good or bad that super-heroes are modern mythology, or even that they're necessarily well done mythology. As the super-hero represents America's might and crusading sense of justice, so does it represent its vanity and ingnorant bullying. I think in the future super-heroes will still be thought of as a part of 20th century American culture, just as the mythical cowboy will always be associated with the America of the 1800s.

Next Issue: We take the concep tof comic book journalism to a new extreme with our 200th "All Comics" issue! Yes, every feature and column in *Amazing Heroes* #200 will be done as a comic!

Our lead feature will be a preview of Scott (*Zot*) McCloud's ambitious new book on comics for Tundra publishing. Scott also contributes the cover, a hilarious parody of '60s pop artist Roy Lichtenstein. Ty (*Justice League, Stig's Inferno*) Templeton does "Fans," true tales of fan encounters both good and bad, and Fred Hembeck, already famous for his comics about comics, does a story about his infant daughter became the world's youngest Superman fan.

As for our columns: Chas Gillen, a familiar face to *AH* readers (he does this issue's "Silly Cover"), illustrates Adam-Troy Castro "Infernal Gall," done in the old EC horror comics style. And if you think Chas is good at spot illos and gags, wait'll you see what he does with Adam's script! For Andy Mangels' "Backstage," top caricaturist Brian Buniak illustrates Andy's parody of the events behind *Batman Returns*. Jeff Lang's interview with *Tales of the Beanworld* cartoonist Larry Marder is turned into comic. . . by Larry Marder! Also, a "Perspective' by Matt "Cynical Man" Feazell, a "Silly Cover" by Mark Martin, my editorial illustrated by Pat Moriarity, and a battle royale between Teri Wood & Dave Strom!

Be seeing you.

—THOMAS HARRINGTON

CONTENTS

28 VALIANT TENDENCIES

Valiant tries for the super-hero market and succeeds. Who'd have thunk it? Jim Shooter & company. That's who.

feature by Dennis Sellers

FREDDY'S BORN 40

Andy Mangels is now the *only* authorized writer of *Nightmare on Elm Street* material. So where's he going with it? Right back to the beginning.

preview by Sheldon Wiebe

THE SANDS OF TIME 46

A dreamy history of three very different heroes with the same name: Sandman.

hero history by Steven Miller

This has been amusing little piece, and next we'll do something I promised
But every bedtime must come to an end
Dream is over

7 PERSPECTIVE Now that Marvel's gone public anything can happen...anything. *by Michael Sangiacomo*

9 NEWSLINE Hot Marvel artists strike out on their own. *by staff*

53 INFERNAL GALL A review of *Maus II*. *by Adam-Troy Castro*

57 BACKSTAGE A look at the first script for *Batman 2*. *by Andy Mangels*

62 A FEW WORDS Roberta "I'm not Bitchy Bitch" Gregory, cartoonist of *Naughty Bits*. *by Jeff Lang*

66 COVER GALLERY EEEH! Giant insects! *by Don Rosa*

68 REVIEWS What's Up, *Doc Savage*? T.M. Maple review the Fantagraphics line. *by various*

17 COMING DISTRACTIONS *Staff*

84 SILLY COVER *Chas Gillen*

85 AMAZING READERS *Readers*

89 THE CARTOONIST *T.S. Wood*

90 STROM'S INDEX *David Strom*

COVER BY DAVE LAPHAM

issue #199
STAFF
february 1992

Editor: *Thomas "Gomez" Harrington*
Executive Editor: *Kim "Fester" Thompson*
Art Director: *Mark "Lurch" Thompson*
News Correspondent: *Sam "Cousin It" Kujava*
Production Assistants: *Roberta "Morticia" Gregory & Jason "Pugsley" Lutes*
Typesetting: *Andrew "Thing" Herington*
Circulation: *Sharon "Wednesday" Kingsford*
Publisher: *Fantagraphics Books, Inc.*
Printed at: *Port Publications*

CONTRIBUTOR'S INFO

Art: Address all submissions to Mark Thompson, Art Director, *Amazing Heroes*, 7563 Lake City Way, Seattle, WA 98115. Send good copies or stats please. *Put your name and address on the back of each piece of art. Always include an S.A.S.E. if you wish your material returned.*

Writing: Address all submissions to Thomas Harrington, Editor, *Amazing Heroes*, 7563 Lake City Way, Seattle, WA 98115. Enclose an S.A.S.E. Submissions must be typed, double-spaced. Keep a copy of your manuscript. *Always put your name, complete address, and phone number on the first page of each article.*

INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

Bud Plant ..... IFC
Comics Interview 16, 27, 39
Fantagraphics ..... 45, 75, IBC

AD RATES

Full page ad $150
[Format: 5 1/2" x 9"]
Half page ad $80
[Format: 3 5/8" x 6 1/2" (island); 5 1/2" x 4 1/2" (horizontal)]
Third page ad $60
[Format: 1 3/4" x 9" (vertical); 3 5/8" x 5" (island); 5 1/2" x 3" (horizontal)]

DISTRIBUTORS

ACTION DIRECT, 114 "A" Bldg., 1401 Fairfax Trafficway, Kansas City, KS 66115, U.S.A. (913) 281-5240; ANDROMEDA PUBLICATIONS LTD., 2113 Dundas Street West, Toronto, Ontario, M6R 1X1, Canada. (416) 593-9894; CAPITAL CITY DISTRIBUTORS, 2827 Perry Street, Madison, WI 53713, U.S.A. (608) 274-8987; DESTINY DISTRIBUTORS, INC., 13609 NE 126th Place, Suite 150, Kirkland, WA 98034, U.S.A. (206) 823-0171; DIAMOND DISTRIBUTORS, 1720 Belmont Ave. Bay C-2, Baltimore, MD 21207, U.S.A. (301) 298-1184; FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS, INC., 7563 Lake City Way, Seattle, WA 98115, U.S.A. (206) 524-1967; MULTI-BOOK & PERIODICAL, 4136 S. Service Road, Burlington, Ontario, Canada, L7L 4X5 (416) 632-5573; NEPTUNE, 197 28th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11232 U.S.A. (718) 965-9165; SECOND GENESIS, 1112 NE 21st ST. Portland, OR 97232 U.S.A. (503) 281-1821; STYX INTERNATIONAL, 10-62 Scurfield Blvd, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3Y-IM5 Canada. (204) 489-0580; SUPERHERO ENTERPRISES, 70 Morris St., Morristown, NJ 07960, U.S.A. (201) 455-1211; TITAN DISTRIBUTORS, Ltd., P.O. Box 250, London E3 3LT, England. (01) 538-8300.

AMAZING HEROES #198 (ISSN 0745-6506), February, 1992. Published monthly by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Editorial, business, and Offices of Publication: 7563 Lake City Way N.E., Seattle, WA 98115. Entire contents copyright © 1992 Fantagraphics Books, Inc. All rights reserved. No material herein may be copied or reproduced in any manner whatsoever (excluding brief excerpts used for review purposes) without written consent of the publisher. Second-class postage paid at Port Washington, WI and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Please send Form 3579 to *AMAZING HEROES*, 7563 Lake City Way, Seattle, WA 98115.
One-year subscription in U.S.: $52.80; outside U.S.A.: $70.00 in U.S. funds, please.

COVER ART © 1992 Voyager Communications. ARTICLES © 1992 respective authors. ILLUSTRATIONS © 1992 as follows (owner/page): © 1992 AC Comics 14a; © 1992 Charles Addams 74; © 1992 M. Caitlin Allred 70; © 1992 Apple 17; © 1992 Pete Bagge 11a; © 1992 Eddie Campbell 21b; © 1992 DC 5a, 10, 20, 46, 47a-b, 48, 49a-b, 50, 51a-b, 96a-d, 97a, c, 71, 73, 80, 81; © 1992 Condé-Nast publications 68; © 1992 Dell 67b; © 1992 Mary Fleener 21a; © 1992 M. Frezzetto 26; © 1992 Chas Gillen 84; © 1992 Doug Gray 83a; © 1992 Roberta Gregory 5c, 62a-b, 63a-b, 64a-b, 65a-b, 83c; © 1992 Hanna-Barbera 57, 58, 59; © 1992 Fred Hembeck 7 (super-heroes), 8 (Marvel Comics); © 1992 Gilbert Hernandez 11b; © 1992 Matt Howarth 18; © 1992 Jack Jackson 77b; © 1992 Lissdermitt 4c; © Everson 72; © 1992 Marvel 9, 12b, 13a, 24, 78a-b, 79, © 1992 MC Comics 67d; © 1992 Millenium & Eddie Newell 25, © 1992 New Line 4b, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44; © 1992 Scott McCloud 6; © 1992 Paisley Park Enterprises 90; © 1992 Stan Sakai 82; © 1992 John Snyder & Doug Wheeler 15; © 1992 Art Spiegelman 53, 54a-b, 55a-b, 56; © 1992 Superstar Comics 12a; © 1992 Andrew Vachs 19; © 1992 Sean Van Briesen 77a; © 1992 Wayne Vansant 76; © 1992 Voyager 28, 30, 31, 32, 33a-b, 34,35a-b, 36, 37; © 1992 Reed Waller 23; © 1992 Bill Watterson 13b; © 1992 Western Publishing 4a, © 1992 Ron Wilber 5b, 69 READER ART © 1992 respective artists. © 1992 DC (Animal Man, Power Girl, Blue Beetle) & Marvel (Gambit, Iron Man, Captain Marvel, Doctor Doom, Spider-Man, Fin Fang Foom, Captain Britain, Meggan). THE CARTOONIST © 1992 Teri S. Wood.

NEXT ISSUE: AMAZING HEROES #200!

AMAZING HEROES
$3.95 (in the U.S. and Canada)
APRIL, 1992
GUEST-STARRING SCOTT McCLOUD!
#200!
MEANWHILE...
FRED HEMBECK & TY TEMPLETON UNLEASH THEIR COMIC FURY ON AN UNSUSPECTING FANZINE!
ALL COMICS ISSUE!!
AARK!
CAN COMICS BE ART, DAD?
ONLY IF IT'S GOT BIG DOTS, SON!
BOOM!
SCOTT McCLOUD
...YOU FORGOT TO MENTION BRIAN BUNIAK, LARRY MARDER, CHAS GILLEN, MARK MARTIN, MATT FEAZELL, PAT MORIARITY & TERI S. WOOD!
—Kibitzin' Kim

THE ALL COMICS ISSUE!
SCOTT McCLOUD TY TEMPLETON FRED HEMBECK LARRY MARDER BRIAN BUNIAK CHAS GILLEN MARK MARTIN MATT FEAZELL PAT MORIARITY TERI S. WOOD

& A FEW PAGES OF TEXT!

PERSPECTIVE

WALL STREET BULL

by Michael Sangiacomo

New York: July 1991
The Marvel Comics Group announced it would sell its stock to the general public for the first time.

Miami: One Year Later
"Ladies and gentlemen, this meeting of stockholders of the Marvel Comics Group will now come to order. It's my pleasure to announce the sale of public stock has enhanced our revenue by $35 million dollars and staved off a hostile takeover by the Valiant Publishing Co."

[General harumphing of approval.]

"Profits this year show a 15% increase over last year thanks largely to the brilliant work of our advertising and creative staff, our fine, quality product and our continued domination of the marketplace."

[The speaker takes a puff from a big cigar and grins broadly.]

"That is what our press release will read. Actually, our profits are up because of our shameless self-promotion and exploitation of these stupid comic lovers, like getting them to buy multiple copies of the same book with different covers. And since we dumped that loser, Jim Shooter, as editor-in-chief, we've been able to, shall we say, push the envelope of reader gullibility."

"If I may," interjects a seedy little man. "I think B.K. deserves a round of applause for thinking up the multiple covers angle. I would have never thought fans dumb enough to buy five copies of a book just because it had a different cover. He proved me wrong."

"And that's not all," the larger, greasy man says. "We have big, big plans for next year. Pre-bagged comics, with numbered bags that we'll push as collector's items so the little schmucks will have to buy two comics just to have one to tear open and read. We'll have more glow-in-the-dark covers, holographic covers and from now on, every book in a series will be designated #1 so collectors will buy multiple copies."

[More harumphs of approval.]

"And, we'll have the artists autograph each and every book so we can sell them for $20 a copy," he says. "And don't forget our new line of comic products, Wolverine beer mugs, Wolverine cigars, Wolverine claws (a snack treat), a Punisher line of toy weapons—it goes on and on. We're starting a fall line of clothing, not just T-shirts, but whole outfits..."

"Sir, excuse me, sir?" says a chubby, young man wearing thick glasses and a Punisher T-shirt from the back of the hall.

[B.K. wipes the saliva from his chin, straightens his ruffled shirt and composes himself.]

"Yes?" he asks.

"Th-that's not going to happen," the boy says, wiping his nose on his sleeve. "Th-there's not going to be any more multiple covers, pre-bagged specials or Wolverine clothes, except for T-shirts of course. From now on Marvel's going to do what it's supposed to do: make good comics."

[Gales of laughter erupt in the room.]

"Th-that's right," the young man stammers, pushing his glasses back up on his nose. "We're cancelling *Nightcat* and *Darkhawk*. We're firing Gerry Conway, Mark Badger, Gavin Curtis, and anybody else who can't write or draw. From now on Marvel's only doing quality books, good stories from good writers and artists. And we're going to teach Rob Liefeld to draw eyeballs.

"And no more using the graphic novel format for junk," he continues. "We'll just use it for special, quality stories that stretch the medium. No more stupid cross-over stories that go on and on. And we're increasing the X-Men book to weekly." he says. "We want more Spider-Man books and Todd McFarlane to draw them all. And *Silver Surfer*, that will come out weekly, no, twice a week. Yeah, that's the ticket."

[B.K. is still chuckling softly as he presses a button on the table.]

"Security, we have a loose nut in here," he says.

"I resent that, sir," the young man says, squirming out of the chair and tossing a proxy list on the table. "I represent the stockholders."

"What is it, son?" B.K. says. "Did you buy a couple of shares last year? Come on son, if you leave now we'll give you this loofah brush, autographed by Stan Lee himself."

"Uh, B.K.," says the seedy man who spoke up earlier. "According to this proxy, this man is the authorized representative for stockholders owning 51% of our stock."

"That's not possible, we only released 35%."

"You forgot the 15% you gave to John Byrne to come back and do *She-Hulk*," the pudgy man says.

"But that's still only 50%; who owns the other 1%?"

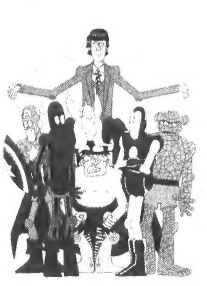
"That is owned by our fearless leader, the man we voted in to take over the comic book operation," the kid says. "His title is 'Editor-in-Chief-Who-Can-Never-Never-Never-Be-Fired-Ever' and he's just outside."

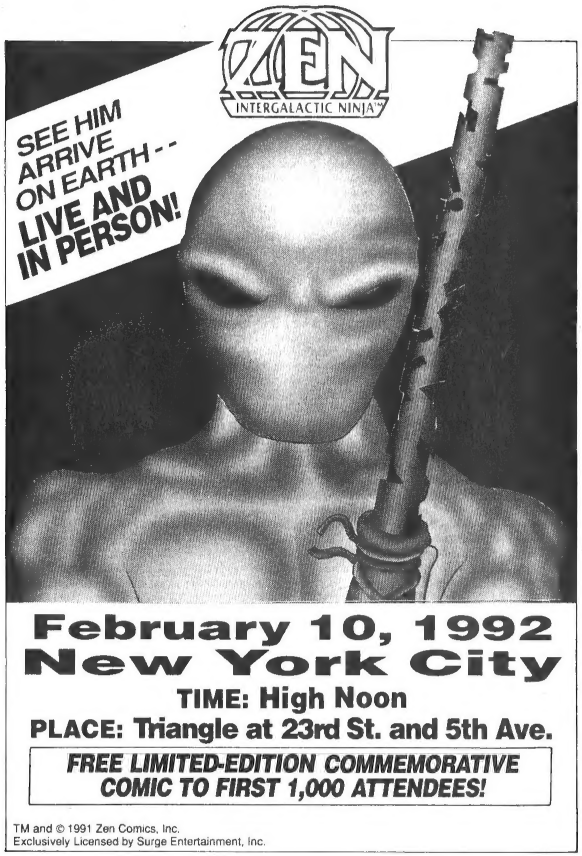
[The door opens and a man about 7 feet tall, strolls in.]

"Hey guys," Jim Shooter says, passing out copies of *Magnus, Robot Fighter*. "Miss me?"

[He pushes B.K. out of his chair, sits down and puts his feet up on the table.]

"Now the first thing we're going to do is start up the New Universe again," Shooter says. "I got this idea for a super-hero, a real tall guy who looks just like me who's summoned to save the universe from a bunch of greedy slimy dirtbags who have assumed corporate control of the galaxy..." ●




ZEN
INTERGALACTIC NINJA™
SEE HIM ARRIVE ON EARTH--
LIVE AND IN PERSON!
February 10, 1992
New York City
TIME: High Noon
PLACE: Triangle at 23rd St. and 5th Ave.
FREE LIMITED-EDITION COMMEMORATIVE COMIC TO FIRST 1,000 ATTENDEES!
TM and © 1991 Zen Comics, Inc.
Exclusively Licensed by Surge Entertainment, Inc.

NEWSLINE

MARVEL ARTISTS GO INDEPENDENT

Todd McFarlane, Rob Liefeld, Jim Lee, and several other major Marvel artists have announced that they are leaving Marvel to form their own company, Image, which will release titles through Malibu as early as May.

McFarlane exlpained that the exodus came about because "everybody thinks about it. Rob, with *Youngblood* at Malibu, was trying the same thing by himself, and we just thought it would be better to do it together.

"It was a matter of timing more than anything else. I figured there's no point in quitting if I don't drag somebody with me."

The list of artists leaving Marvel for Image include, but is not limited to: Todd McFarlane, Rob Liefeld, Jim Lee, Mark Silvestri, Erik Larsen, Whilce Portacio, and Jim Valentino. Also, George Perez will be contributing pin-ups to the first issue of McFarlane's new comic, and McFarlane hopes to involve Jack Kirby as well.

Not all the artists will begin working for image immediately. McFarlane said, "We're not leaving all at once. Some of the other guys have commitments to fill, and will be doing some more stuff for Marvel. But we don't want our Image product to compete with our Marvel product. My opinion is, if you want to break off on your own, you'd better go all the way, 'cause otherwise, we're just playing into their hands."

The first title from Image will be McFarlane's *Spawn* in May. He only says that it will feature "a dark, moody, cloaked guy—I haven't got any way to sum it up in a few words. Once it's out, I'll let other people slap labels on it.

"It was a matter of money—here we're getting a better cut and 100% ownership—but it's mostly a matter of creator's rights. Quitting Marvel to go to DC is no statement for creator's rights."

McFarlane plans no radical departure from the Marvel/DC style of comics. Quite the opposite, "We're going to give the kids exactly what the want to see. They want to see superheroes, they want to see a shared universe, and that's what we're going to give them. We want to make it as easy as possible for them to cross over to us."

WELL, I WISH I COULD SAY IT'S BEEN FUN--
--BUT I WON'T!
IN THE MEANTIME, YOU STAY HERE LIKE GOOD LITTLE BOYS. THOSE WEBS WILL EVENTUALLY DISSOLVE. I JUST HOPE NONE OF YOU HAS TO USE THE BATHROOM IN THE NEXT HOUR.
HA! REMINDS ME
SOMETIMES I CRACK ME UP
AHHHH!
Todd McFarlane takes leave . . . and he's not alone.

While there was no real mass exodus, McFarlane, Liefeld and Lee met with Marvel president Terry Stewart in December to inform him that they would no longer be working for Marvel. "There was a misunderstanding, as much my fault as anyone else's, that we were bargaining for more money, but that wasn't the case at all. They kept asking, 'Well, what do you guys want,' and we kept saying, 'Nothing. We're leaving.'

"We did send them a proposal saying, "this is what we're getting from Malibu. Can you top that?" Of course, they won't agree to it. They'd go broke. *I* wouldn't sign it if I were them.

"We didn't tell them about everyone who was leaving, either. We wanted to keep the element of surprise on our side. I think that anyone worth their salt will eventually join."

McFarlane stressed that the company was formed not as the best way to make more money, but as a way for mainstream artists to continue their work without being exploited by the large companies. He pointed out the number of popular creators who have given up successful positions in mainstream comics out of frustration with the big companies they worked for. "I mean, think about the people who have walked away—Kirby, Miller, Moore. This has been going on for 40 years.

"I want to make it clear that this is not a spur of the moment thing. It was well thought out and organized over a period of time.

"Also, I want to make it clear that Malibu is not part of this. They're fine people, but they're not involved in any of the creative decisions. We brought the deal to them. We made the deal. They work for us.

"It was important that we do this together, and while we were still hot. If you wait five years after you peak, what's the point in trying to leave? And we're not going to make any radical changes in our style that will alienate readers."

McFarlane says he's not worried about the risks of starting an independent venture. "After all, the worst thing that's going to happen is that it will fail and I'll go back to working for Marvel again." ●

TWO NEW *GREEN LANTERN* COMICS AT DC; *LOBO'S BACK* IN APRIL

April will be a big month for *Green Lantern* fans.

In *Green Lantern* #25, Hal Jordan battles Guy Gardner for the right to become Green Lantern of Sector 2814, more commonly known as Earth. We won't say who wins, but we don't think Silver Age Green Lantern fans will be disappointed.

The outcome has far-ranging consequences for Guy, Hal, and John Stewart. Stewart will now star in his own monthly series, *Green Lantern: Mosaic*. Based on the "Mosaic" storyline in *Green Lantern*, it will follow John's attempts to maintain order on the Mosaic world of Oa, where beings from many different planets (including Earth) have been forced to live. Writer Gerard Jones and Cully Anderson & Dan Panosian will be the creative team.

Also in April, *Green Lantern Corps Quarterly* will follow the adventures of the many members of the Corps. The first issue features the talents of Roger Stern, Dusty Abell, Gerard Jones, Tim Hamilton and many others. Then, be on the lookout for the new prestige format Guy Gardner limited series.

Two *Green Lantern* trade paperbacks will be available. *The Road Back* collects #1-8 of the current series, detailing the re-creation of the Green Lantern Corps. the 192-page softcover is only $8.95. In May, *The Green Lantern/Green Arrow collection* reprints the issues #76-82 of the series. This is the period when Dennis O'Neil introduced relevant social issues and Neal Adams brought a new level of realism to super-hero art.

Guy wins this round, but...

Other Releases

When they say *Lobo's Back*, they mean he's starring in a three-issue limited series by Keith Giffen, Alan Grant & Simon Bisley. If you *really* want to know what it's about, he goes around killing people.

The super-human *Black Condor* was created by a ruthless secret organization as part of a plan to transform and rule the world. Black Condor, however, wants nothing of their plans, and becomes a fugitive pursued by the very people who created him. He has no intentions of becoming a super-hero, but when you can fly, who knows what can happen? Rags Morales and Brian Augustyn are the creative team.

Okay, a major industrialist is planning to transform Gotham City into new utopia. So why the need for a cyborg security force? And what's the Riddler got to do with all this? That's what Batman tries to find out in *Batman: Riddler Run*, a three-issue prestige format mini-series by Gerard "I'm writing just as fast as I can" Jones and Mark Badger. It appears in May.

The Impact Annuals feature "Earthquest," a six-part crossover starting with *The Comet*, with back-up stories featuring the Web and the Shield. Trading cards will come with all the annuals. The super-team of the Impact universe is introduced in *The Crusaders* #1, which will be the conclusion to "The Coming of the Crusaders" storyline appearing in *Shield*, *Fly*, *Comet*, *Web*, and *Jaguar*. Augustyn, Waid, R.A Morales & Hanna are the creative team.

The Greatest Flash Stories Ever Told will be available in paperback. The continuity of the TV-inspired *Superboy* comic is wrapped up in the *Superboy Special* written by Stan Berkowitz, pencilled by legendary Superman artist Curt Swan, who is inked for the first time by Joe Sinnott. ●

CARTOONIST AND LONGTIME DC EDITOR SHELDON MAYER: 1917-1991

Sheldon "Shelly" Mayer, creator of Black Orchid, the original Red Tornado, and Sugar & Spike, died on December 21, 1991, of cancer. He was 74.

Beginning with a brief stint as animator for the Fleisher Studios (*Betty Boop*, *Popeye*), he then went on to a long career with publisher M. C. Gaines. He unsuccessfully tried to persuade Gaines and the McClure Syndicate to publish a proposed adventure strip called *Superman*. Though Gaines turned it down, Mayer eventually convinced DC Comics to try publishing it as a comic book.

As editor of All-American Comics (a joint venture with DC) through the late '40s, he oversaw the introduction of such characters as Wonder Woman, the Flash, Green Lantern, and the Justice Society. Artists who joined DC during this time included Carmine Infantino and Alex Toth.

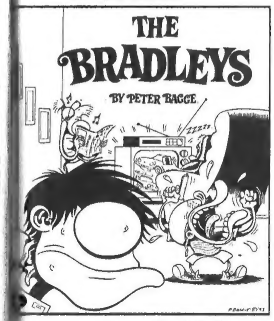
Mayer, however, preferred to be thought of as a cartoonist. His "Scribbly" stories were partly autobiographical stories about him as a young cartoonist. Other Mayer creations include the Three Mouseketeers and Super Juniors. In the '80s, selections from his "Scribbly" comics featuring the original Red Tornado were included in *A Smithsonian Book of Comic Book Comics*. He worked for DC full-time until 1971, then part time until the summer of 1991, 51 years in all.

DC's Paul Levitz called Mayer "One of the founding geniuses of comics, and of DC in particular." He said that throughout his half-century association with DC, "he argued with us, gave us ideas, and tried to make DC a better place because he never stopped giving a damn." ●

FROM FANTAGRAPHICS: ART BY BURNE HOGARTH, *FREAKS* ADAPTATION

The following books will be available from Fantagraphics in April.

Famed *Tarzan* artist Burne Hogarth is often credited with developing the heroic anatomy found in super-hero comics today. Now *The Arcane Eye of Hogarth* collects his many sketches of fantasy, action and humor. The 144-page book will be available as a hard-cover and softcover.



I was a teenaged Buddy Bradley.

Ye Gads! The second, expanded version of Pete Bagge's *Bradleys* (featuring the teenaged Buddy Bradley) will have a new cover and two stories not found in the first edition. There will be a $13.95 signed edition of Dan Clowes' *Lout Rampage!*. Paul Ollswang, called the "true heir to the throne of *Krazy Kat* creator George Herriman," returns with a new title, *Doofer: Pathway to McEarth*. Hal Foster's *Prince Valiant* Volume 15 features "Young Prince Geoffrey."

MONSTER

In 1932, film director Todd Browning was told by MGM to make a film more terrifying than *Frankenstein*. The result, *Freaks*, was so shocking that it was withdrawn from theaters and disowned by the studio. It's now a four-issue series by Jim Woodring and F. Solano Lopez, with covers by popular Wolverine artist Sam Kieth.

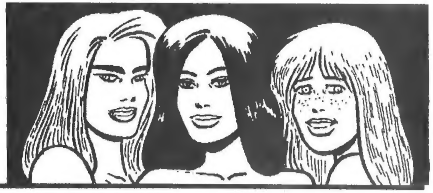
Another classic horror film, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, will become a Monster mini-series. This fully-painted, three-issue black & white series is by Ian Carney (*Judah the Hammer*), and Michael Hoffman (*Taboo*, *Swamp Thing*).

Eros

Gilbert Hernandez's *The Complete Birdland* collects his his series with a new cover and 10 new pages of art.

Motoki's *Karate Girl* is an erotic comic from Japan. that's not unusual. What *is* unusual is the dynamic, American-styled art that the artist uses. For those preferring an English approach, there's *Barbarienne* #1 by Martin Locke & Paul Naring. Learn the mystic secrets in *Return to Voodoo Island* #1 of 2 by John Blackburn. Bob Fingerman returns with *Scuz About Town*, featuring the adventures of a sleazy Hollywood agent. G. Levis' *Liz & Beth Vol III* #1 goes on sale in April. ●

The three *Birdland* comics come together.



COMICS BESTSELLERS—1991

TOP TEN COMICS (TOTAL $$$)

(The comics with the highest orders in terms of $$$ spent)

1.	X-Men #1 Deluxe	Marvel
2.	X-Force #1	Marvel
3.	X-Men #1 (A)	Marvel
4.	Robin II Collector's Edition #1	DC
5.	X-Men #1 (C)	Marvel
6.	X-Men #1 (B)	Marvel
7.	X-Men #1 (D)	Marvel
8.	Wolverine #50	Marvel
9.	Robin II Direct #1	DC
10.	Batman Vs. Predator #1	DC

TOP TEN COMICS (CIRCULATION)

(The comics with the most issues ordered)

1.	X-Force #1	Marvel
2.	X-Men #1 (A)	Marvel
3.	X-Men #1 Deluxe	Marvel
4.	X-Men #1 (C)	Marvel
5.	X-Men #1 (B)	Marvel
6.	X-Men #1 (D)	Marvel
7.	X-Men #2	Marvel
8.	Robin II Direct #1	DC
9.	X-Force #2	Marvel
10.	X-Force #4	Marvel

TOP PUBLISHERS/MARKET SHARES

1.	Marvel	47.55%
2.	DC	26%
3.	Dark Horse	3.71%
4.	Malibu	1.66%
5.	Disney	1.15%
6.	Innovation	1.15%
7.	Eclipse	1.06%
8.	Fantagraphics	1.06%
9.	Viz	0.66%
10.	Voyager	0.64%

TOP TEN BOOKS ($$$)

1	(40). Batman/Dracula	DC
2	(56). Star Trek: Debt of Honor	DC
3	(80). Batman Archives #2	DC
4	(82). Elektra Lives Again	Marvel
5	(117). Wolverine: Bloody Choices	Marvel
6	(140). Crossover Classics	Marvel
7	(154). Masterworks #19: Silver Surfer	Marvel
8	(163). Punisher: Blood on the Moors	Marvel
9	(183). Aliens: Tribes	Dark Horse
10	(188). Lobo Slipcase	DC

CALVIN & HOBBES EXPANDS; ALPHA FLIGHT HERO "COMES OUT"

NORTHSTAR OUT OF THE CLOSET: The "outing" of Marvel's *Alpha Flight* super-hero Northstar has gotten considerable attention from the national press. "Superman came out of phone booths. Marvel Comics' Northstar comes out of the closet," reported Beth J. Harpaz of the Associated Press. The revelation came out when Northstar fought a man who was angry because he felt the public ignored the plight of homosexuals with AIDS. "While I am not inclined to discuss my sexuality with people for whom it is none of their business, *I* am gay!" replied Northstar.

Northstar is not the first mainstream hero to announce his homosexuality. The reformed Flash villain The Pied Piper (now a crusader for the homeless) announced his sexual preference last spring.

* * *

CHRONIC CLIPS: Attention video freaks! New York's *The Chronic Rift* is looking for short (1-10 minutes) film clips that relate in some way to fantasy, science fiction, or comics. The clips cannot be returned, but people whose clips are used will receive a copy of the show in which their tape appears. Send either 3/4 inch (U-Matic) or half inch (VHS) to: Chronic Rift, Film Clips, P.P. Box 2224, New York, NY 10185-0023, or you can call CR at its new public phone line, 212-548-8495.

* * *

MAUS LIKELY TO SUCCEED: Art Spiegelman's *Maus II* is among 25 books nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award for books published in 1991. *Maus II* is nominated in the "Biography and Autobiography" section, competing with four other books, including Phillip Roth's biography of *his* father, *Patrimony: A True Story.*

* * *

SPORTS VILLAINS: The winners in Superstar Comics' "Villain Contest" have been announced. Ron Huett wins the 7-14 age category for creating "Quadro," a psychopath who wields weapons used in different sports. Joe Childress won the 15 years and older category for "Dr. Gator Jackson," a mad scientist. The characters were created for *The Screamer Brothers*, featuring four sports-playing brothers.

A winner of Superstar's "villain contest."

* * *

WHEN PEOPLE COME TO SUE 'EM: David Levy, the creator of *The Addams Family* TV show, is suing the makers of *The Addams Family* movie for $50 million. "They appropriated his ideas and concepts," said attorney Neil Papiano. "He named the characters. [*Actually, cartoonist Charles Addams is credited with naming them—TH*] He put the concept together. He invented the characters "Thing" and "It" completely." Paramount had no comment.

* * *

STILL GOING: The Energizer bunny, often seen waking through commercials, will now be strolling around Harvey Comics. Barry Blumberg of Harvey and Michael Rivard of Everready concocted the unusual advertising gimmick. Harvey won't say where the rabbit appears exactly, but he should be surprising Richie Rich, Casper, and most of the Harvey gang.

* * *

ART CONTEST: Cartoonists will be interested in the upcoming Commercial Art Competition, offering $10,000 in prizes, including a $5,000 grand prize. Graphic design, commercial photography, illustration, airbrush, cartoons and holography. All entries must be accompanied by an official entry form and—here's the catch—an entry fee of $9 per submitted work. To receive the entry form, simply send a postcard with your name and address to: Art Horizons, Commercial Art Department, 140 Prospect Avenue, Suite 16r, Hackensack, NJ 07601. Deadline for receiving entries May 29, 1992.

* * *

THE AMAZING COLOSSAL CALVIN: Following the lead of *Doonesbury* cartoonist Gary Trudeau, Bill Watterson demanded that his Sunday *Calvin & Hobbes* cartoons take up a half page. A report in the *Seattle Times* reflected the usually antagonistic attitude taken by newspapers towards cartoonists who demand more space. It said Watterson "is throwing his weight around like a rampaging Calvinosaurus," and called him "a financial dolt" for refusing to commercialize his characters like other cartoonists. Most papers will accede to Watterson's demands anyway, but

This *Alpha Flight* panel appeared in major newspapers.

THE OFFICES OF MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC...
THINGS SURE HAVE CHANGED AROUND HERE! NOW THAT WE'RE A PUBLIC COMPANY, WE HAVE TO TELL EVERYBODY HOW WELL WE DID. WE'RE PLEASED TO REPORT MARVEL'S RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND NINE MONTHS ENDED SEPTEMBER 30, 1991.
FOR THE QUARTER, NET INCOME INCREASED 213% TO $6.7 MILLION OR $0.55 PER SHARE, AND NET REVENUES INCREASED 59% TO $39.3 MILLION. TELL 'EM, SPIDER-MAN!
HULK
THANKS, HULK. FOR THE NINE MONTHS, NET INCOME INCREASED 164% TO $10.7 MILLION OR $0.89 PER SHARE, AND NET REVENUES INCREASED 35% TO $87.3 MILLION.

The Hulk and Spidey bring good news to Marvel stockholders. They've raised prices!

Leonard Gregory of the Pueblo, Colorado *Chieftain* said he'd rather drop the cartoon than lose editorial control of his comics section.

* * *

DARK HORSE INTERNATIONAL: Liliana Bolton and former *Xpresso* editor Michael Bennent will become the managing editor and editorial director of Dark Horse International, a new company designed to handle European licensing and distribution. A new logo will differentiate these books from the U.S. Dark Horse titles. Bennent said, "We are talking to the cream of U.K. and European talent about publishing their own creations as well as such popular characters as Aliens, Predator, and RoboCop." Also, the company has reportedly been approached by Fleetway Editions to team up Judge Dredd with one of Dark Horse's big movie characters.

* * *

ROCKIN' SGT. ROCK: MTV recently visited the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art in Dover, New Jersey. Explained producer Mike Powers, "Our audience is composed of young people, may of whom are attending middle and high schools." The interviews with Kubert and others at the school will air on a new MTV show in February. Also of note—MTV VJ Steve Issacs commonly talks about comics during his air time. In just the last week he has worn a *Sandman* T-shirt and shown off his Wolverine action figure.

* * *

NANCY FOR LITERATES: Jerry Scott, cartoonist of the much-lambasted post-Bushmiller *Nancy*, seems to be having his day in the sun. He has been chosen by the Arizona Department of Education to lead a statewide literacy program for children. Also, readers of *The Potomac News* of Woodbridge, Virginia, recently voted to bring the strip back after it was replaced by *Foxtrot*.

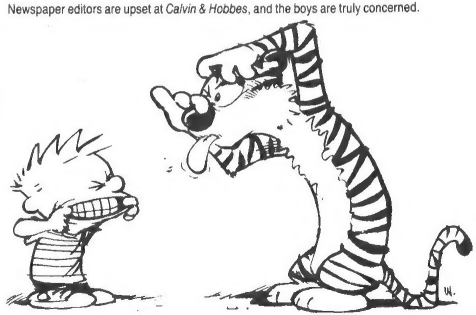
* * *

AUCTION COMICS: Though it produced a few big sellers, the much-anticipated comic book auction at Sotheby's produced "only" $1.2 million in sales, much less than the anticipated $1.5 to $2 million. $55,000 was paid for a copy of Batman's first appearance in *Detective Comics* #27, though a more pristine edition was sold for $80,000 last year. The highest price paid was $77,000 for a Frank Frazetta painting of Vampirella. Marvel president Terry Stewart picked up a prototype cover to *Marvel Comics* #2 for $15,400. The bidding for the cover was handled by corporate flunky Spider-Man.

* * *

HULK SMASHES WALL STREET: Marvel's first quarterly report was published as—what else—a comic book. Sitting behind a desk and wearing a suit and tie, the Incredible Hulk remarked to Spider-Man, "For the Quarter, net income increased 213% to $6.7 million or $0.55 per share, and net revenues increased 59% to $39.3 million. Tell 'em, Spider-Man!" (Whatever happened to "Hulk Smash!") Ol' Greenskin also informed happy stockholders of Marvel's decision to raise the price of their comics in order to generate more income. ●

Newspaper editors are upset at *Calvin & Hobbes*, and the boys are truly concerned.



IN APRIL: PURE IMAGINATION'S *JACK COLE*, RIP OFF'S *APRIL HORRORS*

AC: The new Femforce solo title, *Femforce Up Close*, will feature new color stories every three months. Issue #1 features Nightveil and her connection to the super-heroine Synn.

AC adapts *Dawn Hunter*.

A comic book version of the Film Company's *Dawn Hunter* will be published by AC. Bill Black adapts the script of the film, which features Lois Hamilton.

There's lots of pre-code horror in *Wall of Flesh* #1, featuring art by Dick Ayers and Wally Wood.

The 50th issue of *Femforce* will be in color, with extra pages and a special bonus: The Femforce theme song.

Another Rainbow: The final set in the *Little Lulu Library series* will have 702 pages of stories & covers in three hardbound books. As always, the set will be slipcased and will reprint all covers in full cover.

Archie: The Turtles find themselves trapped between environmentalists and Bigfoot in *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Adventures Special* #1. Like all of Archies titles, it's reprinted on recycled paper.

In the new quarterly *World of Archie*, Arch imagines himself one of Columbus' crew.

Combat Sports: *New Wave Wrestlers* is a humor title featuring a group of super-powered, crime-fighting wrestlers. Michael O'Hara and Vivian McAlexander are the creative team behind the adventures of Stress Warrior, Hedda O'Concrete, and their friends.

Eclipse: Tim Truman's adaptation of the play *Tecumseh* will appear in May. The $8.95 graphic novel will be in full color, and will reflect Truman's reputation for historical accuracy.

Friendly/Personality: John Tartaglione, the artist of Marvel Comics' million-selling biography of Pope John Paul II, does the full color, painted art for *Nolan Ryan* #1, written by Sean Upton. Upton also writes the full color *Madonna Vs. Marilyn* #1, illustrated by Michael Bair & Jim Palmiotti.

Journey to where no man has come before in *Leather & Lace in Outer Space* #1 and *Sex Trek* #1, both by Barry Blair. *Kiss* #1 is a history of the ultimate '70s rock band.

Hero: Flare's little sister *Sparkplug* will be getting her own three-issue series beginning in May. Lou Mougin and Scott Clark take her to Germany, where she investigates a mystery surrounding her missing brother.

In June, Dennis Mallonee and Paul Abrams give the hero/villain *Tigress* her own series. In the first issue, she takes on the criminal organization known as Viper.

Kitchen Sink: KS is making some changes for the better on Mark Schultz's *Xenozoic Tales*. The book will now be subtitled *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs*, will be printed on an upgraded white paper stock, and will have a stiff, coated cover, beginning with issue #12.

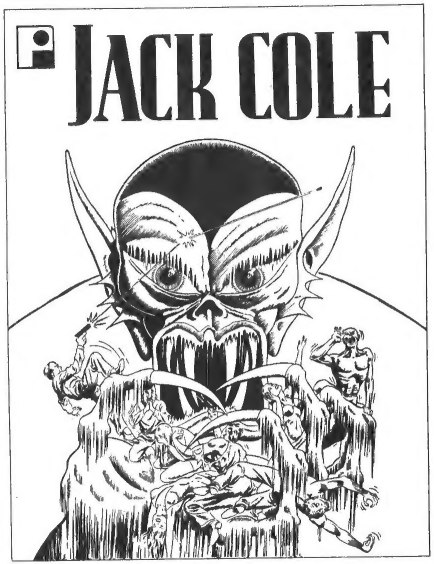
The unexpectedly large creator response to *Images of Omaha*, a benefit book for the ailing *Omaha* artist Reed Waller, has prompted KS to make it a two-issue series. Rich Larson and Steve Fastner, creators of the popular Hulk & Punisher posters for Marvel, will do the cover to the first issue. Paul Chadwick, Frank Miller, Dave Sim, and Al Williamson are among the artists who have agreed to contribute to the series.

Hypnotic Tales collects the work of cartoonist Richard Sala, whose stories read like Kafka crossed with pulp adventures. Though creepy, kooky, and altogether ooky, the $8.95 softcover is for all ages.

Ernie, the popular syndicated strip by Bud Grace, will be collected into a $2 comic. The strip follows the misadventures of Ernie and his uncle Sid, a con man.

Mirage: There will be a color reprint of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* #32,

Read The Jack Cole Treasury, and the Claw will give you a big hug.



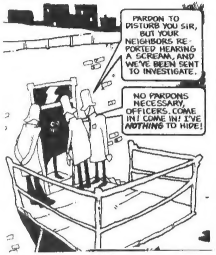
with a story by Kevin Eastman, Larry Talbot, and Mark Bode. Also, as of issue #45 all TMNT will be done by the in-house studio and #50 will be done by Eastman and Laird themselves.

Alicia R. Norman: *Spree & Thee* is a comic that "explores the diversity of color." Each issue centers around twin sisters Theodora and Sprendia, and their multi-ethnic circle of friends.

NOW: The original *Green Hornet* creative team returns with the original Green Hornet in *Sting of the Green Hornet*, in which our hero fights Nazi spies. A collector's edition will come in a bag with a poster version of Jeff Butler's cover.

Tony Caputo, Neil Vokes, and David Mowry are the creative team behind the *Fright Night 3-D Special*.

Pure Imagination: The Golden Age work of Plastic Man creator Jack Cole is collected in *The Jack Cole Comics Treasury*, with 100 pages of Cole comics "carefully retouched for sharp reproduction." The $19.95 softcover even reprints a pre-Plastic Man story in which a hero gains stretching powers.


PARDON TO DISTURB YOU SIR, BUT YOUR NEIGHBORS REPORTED HEARING A SCREAM, AND WE'VE BEEN SENT TO INVESTIGATE.
NO PARDONS NECESSARY, OFFICERS. COME IN! COME IN! I'VE NOTHING TO HIDE!

April Horrors from Rip Off.

Rip Off: Well known for its underground and erotic comics, Rip Off plans to publish more mainstream-oriented titles in '92. *Swamp Thing* writer Doug Wheeler and eight popular artists present *April Horrors*. Described as "The lighter side of the Dark Side," this anthology is illustrated by Simon Bisley, Steve Bissette, Kelley Jones, and others.

Captain Nemo resurfaces in a new adventure book by Rob Davis and Michael Vance. This three-part series details the Captain's adventures before the events in Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

Viz: In May, Rumiko Takahashi's *Ramna ½*, about a male karate expert who turns into a female when doused with water, debuts in America in a 48-page $4.95 comic. The color English version will be adapted by popular writer Gerard Jones.

Striker—The Armed Warrior is about a special agent for an archaeology institute who must protect the unearthed secrets that threaten the world. He does this with the help of his special body armor. ●

COMICS BESTSELLERS—JANUARY

All figures from the January, 1992 Capital City *Internal Correspondence* newsletter. Figures represent direct market retail orders. Numbers in parentheses ( ) represent a title's overall position on the charts.

TOP TEN COMICS (TOTAL $$$)

(The comics with the highest orders in terms of $$$ spent)

1. Punisher War Zone #1	Marvel
2. Batman Vs. Predator #3	DC
3. X-Men #6	Marvel
4. X-Force #8	Marvel
5. Uncanny X-Men #286	Marvel
6. Spider-Man #20	Marvel
7. Wolverine #52	Marvel
8. Warlock & the Infinity Watch #2	Marvel
9. Ghost Rider #23	Marvel
10. X-Factor #76	Marvel

TOP TEN COMICS (CIRCULATION)

(The comics with the most issues ordered)

1. Punisher War Zone #1	Marvel
2. X-Men #6	Marvel
3. X-Force #8	Marvel
4. Uncanny X-Men #286	Marvel
5. Spider-Man #20	Marvel
6. X-Factor #76	Marvel
7. Batman: Gotham Nights #1	DC
8. Wolverine #52	Marvel
9. Warlock & the Infinity Watch #2	Marvel
10. Ghost Rider #23	Marvel

TOP TEN INDEPENDENT COMICS (CIRC.)

1 (24). Predator: Bloody Sands #1	Dark Horse
2 (27). Next Men #1	Dark Horse
3 (30). Aliens: Genocide #3	Dark Horse
4 (42). Terminator: Enemy Within #3	Dark Horse
5 (74). X-Farce #1	Eclipse
6 (78). Magnus Robot Fighter #11	Valiant
7 (80). Cyberrad Direct #1	Continuity
8 (85). Solar #8	Valiant
9 (94). Elfquest: KOTBW #9	WaRP
10 (98). X-O Manowar #3	Valiant

TOP TEN BLACK & WHITE COMICS (CIRC.)

1 (74). X-Farce #1	Eclipse
2 (94). Elfquest: KOTBW #9	WaRP
3 (102). Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #43	Mirage
4 (117). Dark Horse Presents #58	Dark Horse
5 (120). Extreme: The Art of Rob Liefeld	Malibu
6 (123). Faust: Act Nine	Rebel Studios
7 (132). Savage Sword of Conan #195	Marvel
8 (151). Faust: Act One	Rebel Studios
9 (155). Vampirella #3	Dark Horse
10 (158). Cerebus #154	Aarvark-Vanaheim

TOP PUBLISHERS/MARKET SHARES

1. Marvel	47.11%
2. DC	22.64%
3. Dark Horse	6.26%
4. Voyager/Valiant	1.90%
5. Malibu	1.77%
6. Innovation	1.35%
7. Eclipse	1.18%
8. Tundra	0.84%
9. Fantagraphics	0.83%
10. Viz	0.79%

TOP BOOKS ($$$)

1 (22). Compleat Aliens Limited	Dark Horse
2 (33). Spider-Man: Torment	Marvel
3 (41). Lobo's Greatest Hits	DC
4 (47). Fantastic Four Bookshelf	Marvel
5 (74). Swamp Thing: Dark Genesis	DC
6 (96). Boy's Ranch	Marvel

With over 30% of the market, the independents had a good month. Black & White comics also did better than usual.

FICTIONEER BOOKS LTD., 234 FIFTH AVE, SUITE 301, NEW YORK, NY 10001

March COMING DISTRACTIONS!

AAAAHH PRESS

☐ **MS. PMS #1.** A super-heroine becomes one with her armor when it's "that time of the month." Hey, don't look at me; that's what's written in the catalog, that's what I print. By **Chris Swafford**. [*Color comic; $2.50*]

AARDVARK—VANAHEIM

☐ **CEREBUS #156.**

☐ **CEREBUS: Church & State #28 & 29.**

☐ **CHURCH & STATE Volume One.** The first half of the epic in which Cerebus becomes Prime Minister and Pope! By **Dave Sim.** [*B&W softcover; $30.00; 600 pages*]

AC COMICS

☐ **AC ANNUAL #3.** [*B&W comic; $3.50; 52 pages*]

☐ **FEMFORCE #47.**

☐ **JUNGLE GIRLS #5.** Featuring Rulah, Jungle Goddess. By **Black & Ayers.** [*B&W comic; $2.75; 36 pages*]

ADHESIVE COMICS

☐ **JAB #1.** Anthology featuring "Too Much Coffee Man" by **Shannon Wheeler.** I thought drug humor was out of style. [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

AJA BLUE COMIX

☐ **ACHILLES STORM/RAZMATAZ #8.**

☐ **BIO '90: The Prince of the Blood #2 (of 12).**

☐ **RAZORBURN #2.**

☐ **SEXCRIMES USA #1.** In the tradition of—you guessed it—Betty Page. Photos and drawings by that master of modern graphic literature, **Mark Beachum.** [*B&W & color comic; $3.50*]

ALL-PRO SPORTS COMICS

☐ **ALL-PRO SPORTS COMICS #7: LARRY BIRD.**

☐ **ALL-PRO SPORTS COMICS #8: EVANDER HOLYFIELD.**

☐ **GREAT WARRIORS #2: LEE VS. GRANT.**

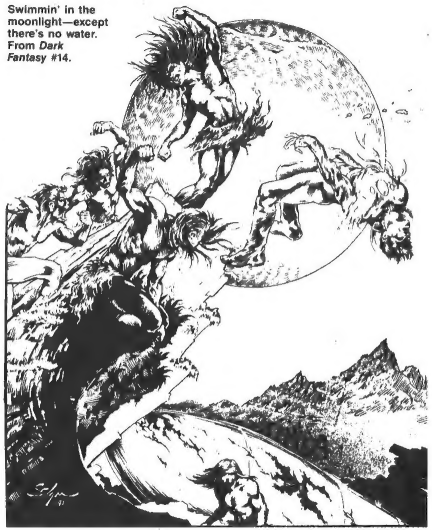
☐ **LEGENDS OF COUNTRY MUSIC #1: HANK WILLIAMS SR..**

ANOTHER RAINBOW

☐ **CARL BARKS AND THE DISNEY DUCKS.** Documenting **Carl Barks'** supervision of the Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge figurines. [*Color softcover; $6.95; 32 pages*]

ANTARCTIC PRESS

Swimmin' in the moonlight—except there's no water. From *Dark Fantasy* #14.



☐ **ALBEDO #4.**

☐ **MANGAZINE #14.**

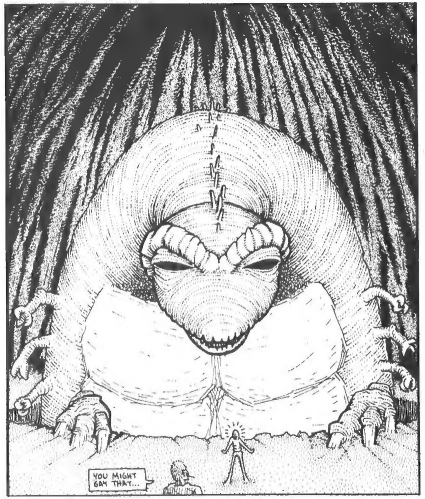
☐ **MIGHTY TINY: THE MOUSE MARINES Limited Edition Graphic Novel.** Collecting all of **Pat Duke**'s "Mouse Marines" stories. Signed & Numbered. [*B&W softcover; $7.50; 72 pages*]

APPLE COMICS

☐ **DARK FANTASY #1.** Following in the footsteps of *Creepy* this is a trilogy of tales delving into the darker side of the human psyche. By **Kevin Schnaeper.** [*B&W comic; $2.75*]

☐ **DAYS OF DARKNESS #3 (of 6).**

☐ **DESERT STORM JOURNAL #6.**



Brave New Words' ***Keif Llama*****: Don't be afraid. Giant monsters can sense fear.**

☐ **FISH SHTICKS #4.**

☐ **FISH POLICE SET A.** Three random issues from #18-22, all first printings.

ARCHIE

☐ **ARCHIE #400.** A look at the eternal triangle: Archie, Betty, & Veronica. By **Gladir & Goldberg.** [*Color comic; $1.25*]

☐ **ARCHIE DIGEST #115.**

☐ **ARCHIE DOUBLE DIGEST #59.**

☐ **BETTY & VERONICA SPRING SPECTACULAR #632.**

☐ **BETTY & VERONICA #52.**

☐ **BETTY & VERONICA DIGEST #55.**

☐ **JUGHEAD #34.**

☐ **JUGHEAD WITH ARCHIE DIGEST #111.**

☐ **LAUGH DIGEST #101.**

☐ **MIGHTY MUTANIMALS #2.** An Archie TMNT spin-off.

☐ **NEW LITTLE ARCHIE DIGEST #7.**

☐ **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES #33.**

☐ **VERONICA #21.**

☐ **ZEN INTERGALACTIC NINJA #2 (of 3).**

BARKER, SAURHEAD, INC

☐ **BOORA STYFOX #1.** Two comics for the price of, uh, two! One's a superheroine and one's a barbarian. Of course, this is a dirty comic, so there's really no difference. By **Woodman & the Kid.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

BILL BARRY ENTERPRISES

☐ **SHERLOCK HOLMES: A STUDY IN SCARLET.** [*softcover; $11*]

BLACK DIAMOND EFFECT

☐ **BLACK DIAMOND EFFECT #5.**

BLAST BOOKS

☐ **MR. ARASHI'S AMAZING FREAK SHOW.** A young girl is tormented by a travelling freak show, until another freak comes to her rescue. By **Suehiro Maru.** [*B&W softcover; $10.05; 160 pages*]

BONEYARD PRESS

☐ **JACKAL #1.** A Wolverine wanna-be on angel dust. Ho-hum. [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **JEFFREY DAHMER: AN UNAUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY OF A SERIAL KILLER.** [*B&W comic; $2.50; 24 pages*]

BRAVE NEW WORDS

☐ **CHRONOS INCORPORATED #1.** [*B&W comic; $2.50; 32 pages*]

☐ **KEIF LLAMA: PARTICLE DREAMS.** The adventures of an unwelcome intergalactic diplomat. By **Matt Howarth.** [*B&W comic; $9.95; 96 pages*]

☐ **VENI #1.** [*B&W comic; $2.50; 32 pages*]

BUDGIE PRESS

☐ **ADVENTURES OF VITAL-MAN #5.**

CALIBER PRESS

☐ **DIVAS #3.**

☐ **GUNS OF SHAR-PEI #3.**

☐ **LIZARDS SPRING SPECIAL.** Featuring characters first seen in *Critters.* By **John Holland & various.** [*B&W comic; $3.50; 40 pages*]

☐ **STREET SHADOWS #2 (of 5).**

☐ **VIRAGE II (of III).**

☐ **ZONE CONTINUUM #2.**

CALIBER/TOME PRESS

☐ **ADVENTURES OF THE NAVAL TREATY** Early Sherlock Holmes. By **Conan Doyle/Day.** [*B&W comic; $3.50*]

☐ **ART OF BRUEGEL** [*B&W comic; $3.95*]

☐ **HENRY V #2.**

☐ **LEAGUE OF RATS AND OTHER FABLES.** [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

☐ **PHANTASMAGORIA** From the twisted mind of Lewis Carroll. [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

☐ **TOTENTAZ**

CAT'S PAWS COMICS

☐ **DRAGONTALES #1.** Comedic, Dungeons & Dragons-type adventure by **Whitaker & Petrie.** [*B&W comic; $2.50; 36 pages*]

COMICREATIONS

☐ **TITAN #1.** The origin. By **Whittenberger & Feliciano.** [*Color comic; $2.00*]

COMIC ZONE

☐ **BRATTERSKAIN #2 (of 3).**

☐ **DAEMON MASK #2 (of 3).**

☐ **EAGLE: DARK MIRROR SAGA #4 (of 4).**

☐ **NIGHTMARE SYNDICATE: THE TREMAYNE HOUSE #2 (of 3).**

COMICO

☐ **ELEMENTALS #27.**

☐ **FATHOM #1 (of 3).** Fathom finds her lost lover, along with his new harem. By **Mann, Trais & Akins.** [*Color comic; $2.50*]

☐ **SLOW DANCE WITH DEATH #1.** Film noir adventure by **O'Leary & Waskey.** In duotone. [*B&W comic; $4.95*]

☐ **STRIKE FORCE AMERICA #1.** With Monolith of the Elementals. By **Mann & Van Wormer.** [*Color comic; $2.50*]

CONTINUITY

☐ **ARMOR #15.**

☐ **BUCKY O'HARE Vol. 1 #6.**

☐ **CRAZYMAN #3.**

☐ **MEGALITH #10.**

CONQUEST PRESS

☐ **LORD OF THE DEAD #1.** A story of Robert E. Howards Detective Steve Harrison.

☐ **NORTHWEST SMITH #1 (of 3).** C.L. Moore's classic space hero. [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

☐ **SONGS OF BASTARDS #1.** Any requests?

CRY FOR DAWN PRODUCTIONS

☐ **BLOOD VOWS #1 (of 3): From the Darkness Book II.** Picking up where the Adventure series left off. This time it's war! By **Polgardy & Balent.** [*B&W comic; $2.50; 32 pages*]

☐ **CRY FOR DAWN Volume VII.** Comic creator's tips. I) Always call something a "volume" where everyone else would use "number." II) Roman numerals are always better than Arabic.

☐ **GIRL: RULE OF DARKNESS #1. Kevin J. Taylor's** Rip Off Press heroine returns. How long do you figure it will take before he copyrights any use of the word "girl" in comics? [*B&W comic; $2.50; 32 pages*]

DARK HORSE COMICS

☐ **ALIENS: HIVE #2 (of 4).**

☐ **CHEVAL NOIR #28.**

☐ **CREEPY #1.** What could cause such diverse talents as **Peter David, Keiron Dwyer, Gene Colon, Steve Leialoha** and **Jo Duffy** to get together? Why the return of the classic Warren horror mag, *Creepy,* of course! Cover by Dan (*Psycho*) Brereton. [*B&W comic; $3.95; 48 pages*]

☐ **CYBERANTICS.** Ties in to *Aliens: Hive.* By **Prosser & Geary.** [*B&W & red (all over) hardcover; $14.95; 56 pages*]

☐ **DARK HORSE PRESENTS #60.** Special 20-page installment of *Frank Miller's* "Sin City," plus more by **various.** Cover by **Miller & Varley.** [*B&W comic; $2.25*]

☐ **HARDBOILED #3 (of 3).** It's here! Glad they didn't do this as a four-issue series like they'd originally planned. We might not have lived long enough to see the end.

☐ **HARD LOOKS #1.** Comic adaptations of **Andrew Vachs** crime-drama stories by **various.** Cover by Tim (*Shadowrun*) Bradstreet. [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **NEXT MEN #2.**

☐ **OUTLANDERS #0.** Finally the never before seen in America prequel to *Outlanders* "The Key to Graciale." By **Johji Manabe.** [*B&W comic; $2.75; 40 pages*]

☐ **SECRET OF THE SALAMANDER #1.** A tale of immortality by **Jaques Tardi.** [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

☐ **TALES OF ORDINARY MADNESS #3 (of 4).**

☐ **TERMINATOR: HUNTERS & KILLERS #1 (of 3).** Finally, a story set in the future, maybe this one will have a different plot than the last 3 series. By **T. Smith, Jaaska, & Panosian.** [*Color comic; $2.50*]

☐ **TERMINATOR: SECONDARY OBJECTIVES COLLECTION.** Collects the series by **J. Robinson & Gulacy.** [*Color softcover; $13.95*]

☐ **THE THING #2 (of 2).**

☐ **VENUS WARS #12.**

☐ **YOUNG INDIANA JONES CHRONICLES #2.**

DAVAN

☐ **MINDS PLAY #8.**

☐ **MINDS PLAY #9.**

DC

☐ **ACTION COMICS #676.** [*ships 3/5*]

☐ **AQUAMAN #6.** A *Final* battle between Black Manta and you know who. [*ships 3/26*]

☐ **BATMAN #477.** "A Gotham Tale." Part 1 of a 2-part bi-weekly story. [*ships 3/26*]

☐ **BATMAN: GOTHAM KNIGHTS #3 (of 4).** [*ships 3/19*]

☐ **BLACK HOOD #6.** Introducing yet again the new Black Hood. (Sheesh! 3 in 6 issues. You'd think this was the Suicide Squad.) [*ships 3/19*]

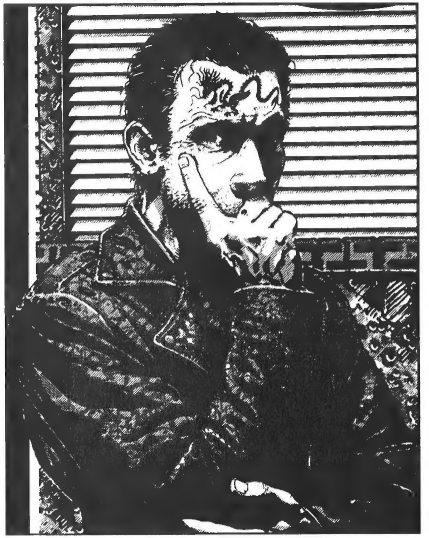
☐ **THE COMET #10.** A team-up with the Fly. By **Wald, West, & Panosian.** [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 3/12*]

☐ **COOL WORLD #1.** The prequel miniseries establishing "doodles" of Cool World before the release of Ralph Bakshi animated film. By **Eury, DeStefano, Fiala & Wray.** [*Color comic; $1.75; ships 3/12*]

☐ **DC SILVER AGE CLASSICS: ACTION COMICS #252.** The first appearance of Supergirl. [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 2/20*]

☐ **DC SILVER AGE CLASSICS: ADVENTURE COMICS #247.** DC, having just ceased working with World Color Press, is reprinting ten comics from its 37 years with the printer. In this reprint, the Legion of Super-Heroes is introduced. [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 2/20*]

Hard Looks**: "Let's see . . . I got drunk and visited a tattoo parlor—then what?"**



In the *Wonder Woman Special*, **Diana continues to spread her message of peace.**

☐ **DC SILVER AGE CLASSICS: BRAVE AND THE BOLD #28.** First appearance of The Justice League of America. [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 2/20*]

☐ **DC SILVER AGE CLASSICS: DETECTIVE COMICS #225.** Considered the start of the Silver Age. The introduction of J'Onn J'Onzz, the Manhunter from Mars. [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 2/20*]

☐ **DC SILVER AGE CLASSICS: DETECTIVE COMICS #327.** The "New Look" Batman makes his debut. [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 2/20*]

☐ **DC SILVER AGE CLASSICS: GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW #76.** The critically acclaimed Denny O'Neil-Neal Adams introduction of relevancy into the comic book medium. [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 2/20*]

☐ **DC SILVER AGE CLASSICS: HOUSE OF SECRETS #92.** Introducing the father of DC modern horror Swamp Thing! [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 2/20*]

☐ **DC SILVER AGE CLASSICS: SHOWCASE #4.** The first reconstruction of a Golden Age character as Barry Allen becomes, The Flash. [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 2/20*]

☐ **DC SILVER AGE CLASSICS: SHOWCASE #22.** The one true Green Lantern, Hal Jordan makes his debut. [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 2/20*]

☐ **DC SILVER AGE CLASSICS: SUGAR AND SPIKE #99.** NOT A REPRINT!! This is an entire book of previously unpublished material by the late Sheldon Mayer. [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 2/20*]

☐ **DEATHSTROKE, THE TERMINATOR #10.** Guns and Roses 1 of 2. Introducing the new, female vigilante. By **Wolfman, Nichols & Perez.** [*Color comic; $1.75; ships 3/19*]

☐ **THE DEMON #23.**

☐ **DETECTIVE COMICS #643.** [*ships 3/5*]

☐ **DOCTOR FATE #39.** [*ships 3/5*]

DOOM PATROL #54. [*ships 3/12*]

FLASH #62

☐ **THE FLY #9.** [*ships 3/5*]

☐ **THE GREATEST 1950'S STORIES EVER TOLD TPB.** By **Jack Kirby, Curt Swan & various.** [*Color softcover; $14.95; 288 pages*]

☐ **GREEN ARROW #59.** "Predator" Part 1 of 2. Not a movie tie in! (Thank God!) [*ships 3/5*]

☐ **HAWKWORLD #23.** [*ships 3/19*].

☐ **HELLBLAZER #53.** "Royal Blood" Part 2 of 4. [*ships 3/26*]

☐ **JAGUAR #9.** "The Coming of the Crusaders" [*ships 3/26*]

☐ **JUSTICE LEAGUE AMERICA #61.** [*ships 3/12*]

☐ **JUSTICE LEAGUE AMERICA #62.** [*Color comic; $1.00; ships 3/26*]

☐ **JUSTICE LEAGUE EUROPE #37.** [*ships 3/19*]

☐ **LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #29.** The "Terra Mosaic" continues. [*ships 3/26*]

☐ **THE MANY DEATHS OF THE BATMAN.** A trade paperback of the **John Byrne** story. Art by **Apara & DeCarlo.** [*Color comic; $3.95; 80 pages; ships 3/5*]

MY NAME IS CHAOS #3 (of 4).

NEW TITANS #86. Well Slade just kicked Batman's ass; lets see how he does against Batman's protege, Nightwing. [*ships 3/26*]

RAGMAN #8 (of 8) Ragman vs Batman. [*ships 3/19*]

SANDMAN #38. The conclusion of "A Game of You." [*ships 3/26*]

SHADE, THE CHANGING MAN #23. "The Road" Part 4 by **Milligan and McCarthy.** [*ships 3/19*]

☐ **SKULL AND BONES #3 (of 3).** [*ships 3/12*]

STAR TREK #31. [*ships 3/19*]

STAR TREK ANNUAL #3. BY **Weinstein, Dwyer, & Starr.** [*Color comic; $3.50; 64 pages; ships 3/26*]

☐ **SUICIDE SQUAD #64.** [*ships 3/5*]

☐ **SUPERMAN #67.** "Panic in the Sky" aftermath. [*ships 3/26*]

☐ **SUPERMAN: THE MAN OF STEEL #11.** [*ships 3/19*]

☐ **WARLORD #4 (of 6).** [*ships 3/5*]

☐ **THE WEB #9.** "The Coming of the Crusaders."[*ships 3/19*]

☐ **WONDER WOMAN SPECIAL #1.** "Operation: Cheetah" Part 1. Guest-starring Deathstroke, The Terminator. Part two is continued in *Wonder Woman* #63. By **Messner-Loebs & various.** [*Color comic; $1.75; ships 3/19*]

DEADLINE

☐ **DEADLINE #40.** Featuring "Tank Girl" and "Johnny Nemo." By **various.** [*B&W magazine; $4.50*]

DELL BOOKS

GIVE ME LIBERTY: AN AMERICAN DREAM.

DISNEY

DISNEY ADVENTURES DIGEST #19.

DISNEY COMICS IN 3-D #1. By **Carl Barks, William Van Horn,** and **Don Rosa.** [*3-D comic; $2.95*]

☐ **DONALD DUCK ADVENTURES #25.** Piece #1 of the Duckburg Map. [*Color comic; $1.50*]

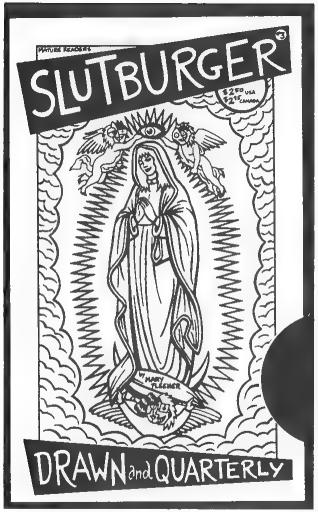
UNCLE SCROOGE #267 Piece 2 of the Duckburg Map

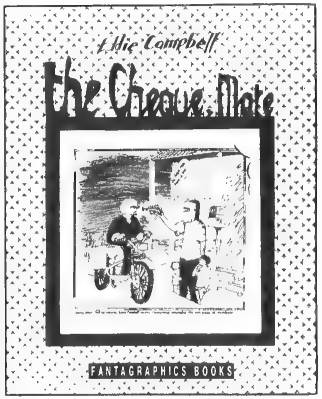
☐ **WALT DISNEY'S COMICS & STORIES #572.** Piece 3 of the Duckburg Map.

DOUBLE DIAMOND

EYEBEAM #4.

HEPCATS #10. "Snowblind," Par Eight By **Martin Wagner.** [*B&W comic; $2.25, 40 pages*]





Left: Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary. Right: Eddie, Eddie . . . Does the Freddy? Oh, forget it.

DOUBLE EDGE PUBLISHING

TIME GATES #5

DRAWN & QUARTERLY

DRAWN & QUARTERLY #8.

SLUTBURGER #3. New publisher

ECLIPSE

DINOSAURS ATTACK #2 (of 3)

MAD DOGS #2. Police brutality goes one step further in this 3-issue series of bad ex-cops

MIRACLEMAN BOOK FOUR: THE GOLDEN AGE. Reprinting *Miracleman* #17-22 by **Alan Moore & John Totleben.** [*Color softcover; $14.95, 144 pages*]

ESTUDIOS DEJA-VU

VOODOO INK #1. Puerto Rican adventure anthology translated into English. By **various.** [*B&W comic; $1.95; 24 pages*]

FANDATA

FANDOM DIRECTORY 1992.

FANTACO

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD #3.

SHRIEK #4.

FANTAGRAPHICS

CHEQUE, MATE #1 Early **Eddie Campbell** Includes previously unseen material. [*B&W magazine; $3.50; 40 pages*]

COLIN UPTON'S OTHER BIG THING #4 An epilogue to "The Home Front", a Japanese version of Upton's series "Famous Bus Rides" with a reverse manga-style cover, and more.

CRUCIAL FICTION #2. *Hate* and *Eightball* fans should dig this alternative comic

CRUMB SKETCHBOOK: Volume 1. Beginning series reprinting all of **Robert Crumb's** legendary sketchbooks. [*B&W book, $19.95 softcover, $35.00 hardcover, $75.00 signed & Numbered hardcover*]

HATE #8. Buddy Bradley goes show buisness as he decides to manage a rock band with Stinky's "help."

LOVE & ROCKETS: Volume Four Soft or Hardcover. Both are second printings

LOVE & ROCKETS #38. As the 10th annnversary for *Love & Rockets* looms, all three storylines are racing to their conclusions.

PICTOPIA #2.

STREET MUSIC #3 Cover by Guy Colwell.

USAGI YOJIMBO #34. Stan begins his next epic which explores Gen's origin. But first Usagi has to save Gen from a pack of trained killer tokage lizards!

EROS COMIX

MODERN ROMANS #1 (of 3) This is one subject matter that doesn't need any spicing up. By **Virgil Heron.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **THE MUSE #1.** By the creator of *I Wanna Be Your Dog*, **Ho Che Anderson.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **ONE HUNDRED DEGREES IN THE SHADE #2 (of 4)**

SKINHEADS IN LOVE #1 Racy, not racist, we promise. By **Bob Fingerman.** [*B&W comic; $2.50; 24 pages*]

TALK DIRTY #2.

WENDY WHITEBREAD #2. She's back! By someone using the pen name of **Anton Drek.** Who could it be? Who *could* it be? [*B&W comic; $2.50; 24 pages*]

MONSTER COMICS

THE HOLO BROTHERS #10 (of 10). The slam-bang finale called "Meet the New Boss." By **Jim Rohn.** [*B&W comic; $2.25*]

RAZORGUTS #3

☐ **SHE-BUCCANEER #1 (of 2).** High seas adventure with a twist, with a female pirate sporting twin Jolly Rogers! And they've got a lot to be jolly about! By **Bill Hughes.** [*B&W comic, $2.25*]

FATE COMICS

ROCKIN ROLLIN MINER ANTS #2.

FIRECRACKER

THE QUARDRO GANG #2. Relax, they can walk 'n' everything They're a a bunch of female quadruplets By **Joyce L. Stevens.** [*B&W comic; $1.50; 24 pages*]

FLEETWAY

☐ **2000 AD #776-779.** Featuring Judge Dredd. By **various.** [*Color comics; $2.95 each*]

FLEETWAY/QUALITY

☐ **CYBERCRUSH: ROBOTS IN REVOLT #7.**

☐ **DARE THE IMPOSSIBLE #4.**

☐ **DREDD RULES! #6.**

☐ **JUDGE DREDD CLASSICS #65.**

☐ **NECROPOLIS #3 (of 12).** Judge Dredd's genetic replacement isn't exactly working to factory specs. Time for a recall, and look who's the inspector—Psi-Judge Anderson! Enter the *Necropolis*.

☐ **ROGUE TROOPER #3.**

☐ **666: THE MARK OF THE BEAST #1.** Science fiction/horror anthology by **various**. [*Color comic; $1.95*]

FRIENDLY/PERSONALITY

BEST COMICS

☐ **RESCUEMAN #5**

CELEBRITY COMICS

☐ **STAR TREK EPISODE GUIDE #1.** [*Color comic; $5.95; 48 pages*]

FRIENDLY

☐ **BAMBI THE HUNTER #3.**

☐ **LEATHER & LACE: UNDERCOVER #3 (of 5).**

☐ **VAMPYRE'S KISS: THE FIRST EVIL #3 (of 4).**

☐ **XXX—WOMEN: CLASH OF THE XXX'S #3 (of 3)**

PERSONALITY COMICS

☐ **BASEBALL SLUGGERS #3 (of 4): Frank Thomas** [*B&W comic; $2.95*]

☐ **LED ZEPPELIN # (of 4): Jimmy Page**

☐ **NEW CREW #6: Michael Dorn.**

☐ **ORIGINAL CREW #7: Nichelle Nichols.**

☐ **SLAM DUNK KINGS #1 (of 4): Michael Jordan.** [*B&W comic; $2.95; 32 pages*]

GLADSTONE/DISNEY

☐ **THE COMPLETE CARL BARKS LIBRARY OF WALT DISNEY'S COMICS & STORIES IN COLOR: Volume 3.**

GRAPHOMANIA COMICS

☐ **DEATH HOUSE #1.** Mutants stalk a devastated New York. Where do they come up with these great ideas? By **Everett & James.** [*B&W comic; $2.50; 40 pages*]

☐ **GRAPHOMANIA PRESENTS: GRAPHIC COVER #1.**

GREATER MERCURY

☐ **ASSASSIN FORCE #2.** We get a look at the Mutant Zone of California, which the solicitation describes as "existing in *Assassin Force* reality only." Phew! That's a relief!

☐ **DAEMON'S BLOOD #5.**

☐ **GMC ACTION #11.**

☐ **GRIPS #12.**

☐ **GRIPS GRAPHIC NOVEL #1.** Collects *Grips* #1-4. Art by **Tim Vigil.** [*B&W softcover; $9.95; 128 pages*]

☐ **LEGION X-2 #10.**

☐ **SHACKLES #2.**

☐ **VENGEANCE #3.**

GROUND ZERO GRAPHICS

☐ **SHADOWALKER #5.**

HARVEY COMICS

☐ **ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS #1.** [*Color comic; $1.25*]

☐ **BABY HUEY #4.**

☐ **CASPER & FRIENDS #5.**

☐ **CASPER DIGEST #4.**

☐ **FELIX THE CAT DIGEST #1.** Guest starring Omaha. Just kiddin'. [*Color digest; $1.75; 96 pages*]

☐ **MUPPET BABIES ADVENTURES #1. By Stan Kaye & Marie Severin.** [*Color comic; $1.25*]

☐ **NINE LIVES OF FELIX THE CAT #5.**

☐ **RICHIE RICH BIG BUCKS #8.**

☐ **RICHIE RICH MILLION DOLLAR DIGEST #26.**

☐ **SPOOKY BIG BOOK #1.**

☐ **TOM & JERRY AND FRIENDS #4**

☐ **WENDY #7.**

☐ **WOODY WOODPECKER & FRIENDS #4.**

HERO GRAPHICS

☐ **CHAMPIONS CLASSICS #4.**

☐ **FLARE #10.**

☐ **FLARE ADVENTURES #4.**

☐ **HERO GRAPHICS SUPER-SPECTACULAR #1.** Reprint Issues of *Captain Thunder, Eternity Smith*, or *Flare* in a 100 page book with a new cover by Tim Burgard. (Contents may vary) By **various.** [*Color comic; $3.95; 100 pages*]

IANUS PUBLICATIONS

☐ **CYBERSUIT ARKADYNE #1 (of 6).** A new cybersuit may not be in perfect working order. By **Jarrad & Eldred.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

INNOVATION

☐ **DARK SHADOWS #1 (of 4).** The story takes place during Barnabas' 10-week cure for vampirism. By **Campiti & Rockwell.** [*Color comic; $2.50*]

☐ **FREDDY'S DEAD: THE FINAL NIGHTMARE.** Collects the series by **Andy Mangels, Witherby & Kaalberg.** [*Color softcover, $2.50; 76 pages*]

☐ **INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE #4**

☐ **LOST IN SPACE #8**

☐ **NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET: THE BEGINNING #1 (of 4).** See how the man became the monster as the series explores details only hinted at in the movies. Written by *Amazing Heroes'* own **Andy** "Backstage" **Mangels**. [*Color comic; $2.50*]

☐ **QUANTUM LEAP #4.**

☐ **TORCHY #5.**

☐ **VIGIL: FALL FROM GRACE #2.** See the review of the first issue inside this magazine. By **Loudermilk & Iverson.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

JADEMAN

☐ **BLOOD SWORD #45.**

☐ **BLOOD SWORD DYNASTY #32**

☐ **DRUNKEN FIST #45.**

☐ **FORCE OF BUDDHA'S PALM #45.**

☐ **IRON MARSHAL #22.**

☐ **ORIENTAL HEROES #45.**

JAL PUBLICATIONS

☐ **SECRET AGENT X-9 Volume 1.** Reprints the strip where the Kitchen Sink book left off! [*B&W comic; $7.95; 72 pages*]

JOHN BROWN

☐ **ELECTRIC SOUP #12.**

☐ **VIZ'S BILLY THE FISH FOOTBALL YEARBOOK.** That's European football, folks. We call it soccer. The difference: In American football, the players get beat up. In soccer, *everybody* gets beat up. [*B&W comic; $7.95; 48 pages*]

KAMITE

☐ **NUMIDIAN FORCE #6.**

☐ **NUMIDIAN FORCE #7.**

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

☐ **FEARLESS FOSDICK: THE HOLE STORY.** More great adventures with the hero of Li'l Abner's favorite comic strip. By **Al Capp.** [*B&W softcover; $11.95; 128 pages*]

☐ **IMAGES OF OMAHA #1 (of 2).** Tributes to ailing *Omaha* artist Reed Waller, by **Steve Rude, Mark Schultz, & various.** [*B&W comic; $3.95; 36 pages*]

☐ **LI'L ABNER VOL 14: 1948 DAILIES.** Introducing the Shmoo. By **Al Capp.** [*B&W softcover; $18.95 softcover, $28.95 hardcover; 168 pages*]

☐ **MELODY #7.**

☐ **OMAHA #17.**

LETHARGIC COMICS

☐ **LETHARGIC COMICS, WEAKLY #10.**

LUNATIC FRINGE

☐ **BLOODEYE: THE ADVENTURES OF SHARON BLOODEYE #4 (of 8).**

MAD

☐ **MAD MAGAZINE #311.**

MALIBU GRAPHICS

ADVENTURE

☐ **ALIEN NATION: PUBLIC ENEMY #4 (of 4).**

☐ **LOVECRAFT #3 (of 4).**

☐ **PARANOIA #4 (of 6).** Based on the role-playing game.

☐ **PLANET OF THE APES #22.** "The Terror Beneath" Part 2 of 4. Continuing the story of Governor Breck from the Apes movies.

☐ **PLANET OF THE APES: SINS OF THE FATHER #1.** A one-shot prequel to the original *Planet of the Apes* movie. By **Valerio & M. Byrd**. [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **RE-ANIMATOR: DAWN OF THE RE-ANIMATOR #1 (of 4).** Yet again a prequel to the movie. By **Spangler & ?** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **ROCKET RANGER #4 (of 6).**

☐ **TORG #2 (of 4).** Based on the West End Games role-playing game.

AIRCEL

☐ **DEBBIE DOES COMIX #2 (of 3).**

☐ **DEBBIE DOES DALLAS #12**

☐ **FLESH GORDON #1 (of 4).** Ties in to the release of the film *Flesh Gordon Meets the Cosmic Cheerleaders!* By **Wilson Mann, & Pellot.** Special edition contains bonus articles. [*B&W comic; $2.95, $4.95 special*]

☐ **GALAXINA #4 (of 4).** Galaxina's origin

ETERNITY

☐ **THE COMPLETE ROBOTECH HANDBOOK.** Collects all three handbooks. Edited by **Dan DeCarlo**. [*B&W softcover; $14.95*]

☐ **DEMONIC TOYS #3 (of 4).**

☐ **ELIMINATOR #3 (of 3).** God is on a rampage and the Eliminators must stop him.

☐ **EVIL ERNIE #4 (of 5).** With cover by Tim Vigil.

☐ **NINJA HIGH SCHOOL #33.**

☐ **ROBOTECH: GENESIS #2 (of 6).**

☐ **SOUTHERN SQUADRON: THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT #3 (of 4).**

MALIBU

☐ **TARZAN THE WARRIOR #1 (of 5).** Tarzan in the '90s! Fully licensed by the ERB. estate with a cover by Simon Bisley! By **Wheatley, Vokes & Hempe.** [*Color comic, $2.50*]

☐ **YOUNGBLOOD #2 (of 3).** If Malibu thinks this is going to be such a hot seller why is it only a 3-issue mini-series? Hmmmmmm!

MANGA MONTH

☐ **JAPAN, INC..**

MARVEL

☐ **ALPHA FLIGHT #108.** "World Tour" Part 2 of 4. [*ships 3/10*]

☐ **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #362.** [*ships 3/10*]

☐ **AVENGERS #347.** Chapter 19 of the 19-part "Operation Galactic Storm". The Nega-bomb explodes and the Avengers plan vengeance in the double-sized conclusion. [*ships 3/17*]

☐ **AVENGERS WEST COAST #82.** Chapter 16 of the 19-part "Operation Galactic Storm." By **R. Thomas, Ross, & Dzon.** [*Color comic; $1.25; ships 3/3*]

☐ **BARBIE #17.** [*ships 3/10*]

☐ **BARBIE FASHION #17.** [*ships 3/24*]

☐ **BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT COMIC BOOK #6.** [*ships 3/10*]

☐ **CAGE #2.** [*ships 3/3*]

☐ **CAPTAIN AMERICA #282.** A reprint with metallic ink cover of the first appearance of Jack Monroe as Nomad. [*ships 3/3*]

☐ **CAPTAIN AMERICA #400.** Part 15 of the 19-part "Operation Galactic Storm." Triple sized issue with a gatefold cover. Plus a reprint of *Avengers* #4, the first Silver Age appearance of Cap. [*Color comic; $2.25; 96 pages; ships 3/3*]

☐ **CAPTAIN AMERICA MOVIE ADAPTATION.** You know how most people say the comics adaptation never does justice to the movie? Well, this comic's an exception because nobody seems to have seen the movie it's based on. By **Stan Lee** and **Hall & Morgan.** [*Color comic; $3.50; 48 pages; ships 3/10*]

☐ **CAPTAIN PLANET #8 (of 12).** [*ships 3/31*]

☐ **CONAN THE BARBARIAN #256.** [*ships 3/17*]

☐ **CONAN SAGA #62.** [*ships 3/31*]

☐ **DAREDEVIL #304.** [*ships 3/3*]

☐ **DAREDEVIL: GANG WAR TPB.** Reprinting *Daredevil* #169-172 and #180. By **Frank Miller & Klaus Janson.** [*B&W softcover; $12.95; ships 3/17*]

☐ **DARKHAWK #14.** "Heart of the Hawk" Part 6 of 6. [*ships 3/3*]

A different look at *Omaha*.

☐ **DEATH'S HEAD II #3 (of 4).** By **Abnett, Sharp, & Lanning.** [*ships 3/17*]

☐ **DEATHLOK #11.** [*ships 3/24*]

☐ **DEFENDERS OF DYNATRON CITY #4 (of 6).** [*ships 3/31*]

☐ **DOCTOR STRANGE #41.** Guest-starring Wolverine. By **Thomas & Isherwood.** [*ships 3/31*]

☐ **DOCTOR WHO MAGAZINE #184.**

☐ **EXCALIBUR #50.** The reason behind Excalibur's formation. This and many more secrets revealed. By **Alan Davis & Mark Farmer.** [*Color comic; $2.75; 60 pages; ships 3/24*]

☐ **FANTASTIC FOUR #364.** [*ships 3/24*]

☐ **GHOST RIDER #25.** 52-page issue celebrating Ghost Rider's 20th anniversary. Plus a *Midnight Sons* preview and four pin-ups. By **Mackie, Wagner & Witherby.** [*Color comic; $2.75; 52 pages; ships 3/10*]

☐ **G.I. JOE #124.** [*ships 3/17*]

☐ **GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY #24.** [*ships 3/10*]

☐ **INCREDIBLE HULK #1.** A reproduction of the Hulk's first appearance in celebration of the Hulk's 30th anniversary. By **Jack Kirby & Stan Lee.** [*Color comic; $2.95; ships 3/10*]

☐ **INCREDIBLE HULK #393.** A 64-page 30th anniversary issue with a green foil cover and pin-ups by **Herb Trimpe, Dale Keown, Sal Buscema, Gil Kane Marie Severin, Al Milgrom, Jim Starlin,** and **Walt Simonson**, a **Ron Frenz** tribute to Jack Kirby, plus even more. By **David & Keown.** [*Color comic; $2.50; 64 pages; ships 3/17*]

☐ **INCREDIBLE HULK ANNUAL #18.** "Return of the Defenders" Part 1 of 4. By **David, Maguire, & Rubenstein.** [*ships 3/31*]

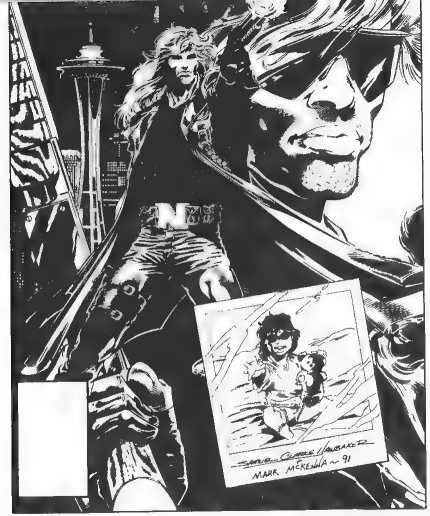
☐ **IRON MAN #280.** A tie-in with *Guardians of the Galaxy* as Iron Man travels to the future to meet The Stark, the civilization that worships him. By **Kaminski, Hopgood, & Pepoy**. [*Color comic; $1.25; ships 3/31*]

☐ **JAMES BOND, JR. #5.** "I'll have a chocolate milkshake, please—shaken, not stirred." [*ship 3/24*]

☐ **KID 'N PLAY #4.** *ship 3/31*]

☐ **MARVEL AGE #112.** [*ships 3/17*]

☐ **MARVEL AGE 1992 PREVIEW** [*ships 3/10*]



Nomad #1: "Dad wants me to be a super-hero, but I really want to be a CPA."

☐ **MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #101, 102 & 103.** By **Mackie & Kleth.** [*Color comics; $1.50 each; ship 3/3, 3/17 & 3/31*]

☐ **MARVEL TALES #261.** [*ship 3/17*]

☐ **MARVEL UNIVERSE MASTER EDITION #18.** [*ship 3/31*]

☐ **MOON KNIGHT #38.** "Blood Brothers" 4 of 4. [*ship 3/31*]

☐ **THE 'NAM #68.** Starring the Punisher. (You've lost the point of this series. Cancel the book.) [*ship 3/31*]

☐ **NAMOR THE SUB-MARINER #26.** [*ship 3/3*]

☐ **NEW WARRIORS #23.** "Nothing But the Truth" 2 of 4. Firestar and Vance's mother testify against him during his trial. [*ship 3/24*]

☐ **NFL SUPERPRO #8.** [*ship 3/3*]

☐ **NOMAD #1.** Our hero travels far and wide, fighting battles with his son by his side. Should be good stuff, Maynard. By **Nicieza, Hawbaker, & McKenna.** [*Color comic; $2.00; ships 3/3*]

☐ **THE PIRATES OF DARK WATER #7 (of 9).** [*ships 3/24*]

☐ **PUNISHER #63.** [*ship 3/17*]

☐ **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #42** [*ships 3/3*]

☐ **PUNISHER WAR ZONE [#3.** [*ships 3/10*]

☐ **QUASAR #34.** Chapter 17 of the 19-part "Operation Galactic Storm". [*ships 3/10*]

☐ **QUASAR SPECIAL #3.** It's really *Quasar* #34, but renumbered for the newsstand market. [*ships 3/10*]

☐ **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #197.** [*ships 3/10*]

☐ **SHE-HULK #39.** [*ships 3/3*]

☐ **SHE-HULK TPB.** Reprints the original eight issues of her series. By **Byrne & Wlacek.** [*Color softcover; $12.95; 176 pages; ships 3/24*]

☐ **S.H.I.E.L.D. #35.** Guest-starring Luke Cage. [*ships 3/17*]

☐ **SILVER SURFER #65.** [*ship 3/24*]

☐ **SLEEPWALKER #12.** [*ships 3/10*]

☐ **SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #187.** "Funeral Arrangements" 3 of 3. [*ships 3/24*]

☐ **SPIDER-MAN #22.** To boost Larsen's (ahem) writing are guest stars galore. Deathlok, Hulk, Solo, Sleepwalker and Ghost Rider. (If everybody's guest-starring here, who's guarding the Marvel Universe? Captain Ultra?) In "Revenge of the Sinister Six" 5 of 6. By **Erik Larsen.** [*Color comic; $1.75; ships 3/17*]

☐ **SPIDER-MAN MASTERWORKS.** A soft-cover of *Marvel Masterworks* Volume One. By **Steve Ditko & Stan Lee.** [*Color softcover; 12.95; 144 pages; ships 3/3*]

☐ **THE THING #2 (of 4).** [*Color comic; $1.25, ships 3/10*].

☐ **THOR #447.** [*ships 3/24*]

☐ **TOXIC CRUSADERS #1.** Kill it quick before it multiplies. By **Stan Lee & various.** [*Color comic; $1.25; ships 3/3*]

☐ **UNCANNY X-MEN #288.** [*ships 3/3*]

☐ **UNCANNY X-MEN ANNUAL #16.** "Shattershot" part two. [*Color comic; $2.25; ships 3/10*]

☐ **WARLOCK #1 (of 6).** Reprints the original series by **Jim Starlin.** [*Color comic; $2.50; ships 3/3*]

☐ **WARLOCK AND THE INFINITY WATCH #4.** [*ships 3/17*]

☐ **WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #88.** "The Name of the Rose," 5 of 6. To defeat Richard Fisk, the New Kingpin of Crime, Spidey joins The Rose. [*ships 3/3*]

☐ **WHAT IF? #36.** "Time Quake" 3 of 5. "What If the X-Vampires Fought Dormammu During Inferno?" Whew, talk about high concept. [*ships 3/17*]

☐ **WHAT THE?! #18.** [*ships 3/31*]

☐ **WOLVERINE #54.** At last! The return of the famous Marvel Universe floating poker game. Last seen in (I think) *Marvel Two-in-one* #51. [*ships 3/10*]

☐ **WONDER MAN #8.** Chapter 18 of the 19-part "Operation Galactic Storm". Wonder Man changed forever! Ooooh scary. [*ships 3/10*]

☐ **WORLD CHAMIONSHIP WRESTLING #2.** [*ships 3/3*]

☐ **X-FACTOR #78.** [*ships 3/17*]

☐ **X-FACTOR ANNUAL #7.** "Shattershot" part three. [*Color comic; $2.25; ships 3/17*]

☐ **X-FORCE #10.** Deadpool pays Domino a visit. [*Color comic; $1.25; ships 3/24*]

☐ **X-FORCE ANNUAL #1.** "Shattershot" part four. [*Color comic; $2.25; ships 3/24*]

☐ **X-MEN #8.** [*ships 3/17*]

☐ **X-MEN ANNUAL #1.** "Shattershot" part one. By **Nicieza & various.** [*Color comic; 2.25; ships 3/3*]

☐ **X-MEN CLASSIC #71.** By **Claremont, P. Smith & Wlacek.** [*ships 3/24*]

EPIC

☐ **AKIRA #36.** This is it. The final stretch to the last issue #37. Followed by two bonus issues full of additional material [*ships 3/17*]

☐ **AKIRA TPB #4.** [*ships 3/10*]

☐ **GROO THE WANDERER #89.** [*ships 3/10*]

☐ **HELLRAISER: BOOK OF THE DAMNED #2.** [*ships 3/24*]

☐ **IDOL #1 (of 3).**[*ships 3/17*]

☐ **NIGHTBREED #15** [*ships 3/17*]

☐ **THE STARS MY DESTINATION GN.** Alfred Bester's book adapted by **Howard Chaykin.** [*Color softcover; $15.95; 160 pages; ships 3/24*]

MIDNIGHT COMICS

☐ **ADVENTURES OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS #2 (of 12)**

☐ **MOGOBI DESERT RATS #5.**

☐ **PAJAMAMAN #1.** What do you expect when Marvel publishes something called *Sleepwalker*! By **Arnold.** [*B&W comic; $2.25*]

MILKY WAY GRAPHICS

☐ **HIGHTAUER #1.**

MILLENIUM PUBLISHING

☐ **DOC SAVAGE: DOOM DYNASTY #1 (of 2).** More danger & death for the good doctor. By **Ellis, Weirngo, Lewis & DeLay.** [*Color comic; $2.50*]

☐ **WEIRD TALES ILLUSTRATED #1** [*$2.95 Regular; $4.95 Deluxe*]

MIRAGE

☐ **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES #45.** All I want to know is. . .have Eastman & Laird forgotten how to write Turtles stories? [*B&W comic; 2.00*]

MORAL COMICS

☐ **CROSSFORCE #3.**

☐ **HOLY KNIGHT #1.**

MU PRESS

☐ **BEAUTY AND THE BEASTS.** A portfolio of anthropomorphic art by the masters themselves. Edited by **Diana Vick.** By **Reed Waller, Monika Livingston & various.** [*B&W comic; $2.50; 32 pages*]

☐ **SKYE BLUE #1 (of 3).** The newest super-hero on the block. By **Decker & Ott.** [*B&W comic; $2.50; 32 pages*]

NBM

☐ **HOW TO BE A SUPERHERO.** With tools you probably have around the house. [*B&W softcover; $7.95*]

NEW ENGLAND COMICS

☐ **THE TICK OMNIBUS II: Thursdays Ad Infinitum.** Issues #7-10 by **Ben Edlund & Dave Garcia.** [*B&W softcover; $10.95; 120 pages*]

NIGHT WYND ENTERPRISES

☐ **BLITZ #1 (of 4).** The return of Blood & B-wang. By **Barry Blair.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **DRAGONFIRE #4 (of 4).**

☐ **ELFHEIM: VOLUME II #2 (of 4).** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **ELFLORE #2 (of 4).**

☐ **FOXFIRE #2 (of 3).**

☐ **SERPENTYNE #2 (of 3).**

NORTHSTAR

☐ **FRITZ WHISTLE #1.** Bloodthirsty pirates by **Joe Vigil.** [*B&W comic; $2.75*]

☐ **KLOWNSHOCK #3.**

☐ **LEATHERFACE SPECIAL #1.** New stories about the star of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre.* By **Niles, Pons, & Gabriele.** [*Color comic; $2.75*]

Weird illustrations from *Weird Tales Illustrated.*

☐ **SPLATTER #4.**

☐ **TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE #1.** Good clean fun by **N. Trais & J.J. Birch. Cover by Tim Vigil.** [*Color comic; $2.75*]

NOW COMICS

☐ **FREEJACK #1 & 2 (of 3).** Based on the motion picture. There is also a collectors edition for $2.50 with a poster. By **Dixon, Stiner, & DeZuniga.** [*Color comic; $1.95*]

☐ **GREEN HORNET #9.**

☐ **MARRIED: WITH CHILDREN #9.**

☐ **RALPH SNART ADVENTURES #1 (of 3).** All right, try to follow me. There are four different cards inserted with the same comic. Plus a newsstand version which has a random card of the four inserted. By **Marc Hansen.** [*Color comic; $2.50*]

☐ **REAL GHOSTBUSTERS #7.** Ghostbusters go 3-D.

☐ **TALES OF THE GREEN HORNET #5.**

☐ **TWILIGHT ZONE #7.**

ONE SHOT PRESS

☐ **CAPTAIN'S JOLTING TALES #2.**

PAGE ONE, INC

☐ **COMIC RELIEF #35.**

PAISANO

☐ **BIFF BANG POW #3.**

REBEL STUDIOS

☐ **DOG #3.**

☐ **FAUST ACT TWO—REBEL EDITION.**

REVOLUTIONARY COMICS

☐ **BASEBALL LEGENDS #3: Ted Williams.**

Margot In Badtown: Touch her? Now, why would anybody want to do that?

☐ **BASEBALL SUPERSTARS #5: Rickey Henderson.**

☐ **BEATLES EXPERIENCE #8.**

☐ **CARNAL COMICS: Demi the Demoness #1.** By **Steven S. Crompton.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **CONTEMPORARY BIO-GRAPHICS #3: Gene Roddenberry.**

☐ **HARD ROCK COMICS: JANE'S ADDICTION #3.**

☐ **ROCK N' ROLL COMICS: GRATEFUL DEAD #47.**

☐ **SPORTS SUPERSTARS: Wayne Gretzky #2.** Norah's pick of the month.

RIP OFF PRESS

☐ **BIG DOG FUNNIES #1.** Alternative lifestyle comics by **various.** [*B&W comic; $2.50*]

☐ **DREAMS OF A DOG #2.**

☐ **EVERYMAN'S DREAM #1.** One-shot by **Joe Lee.** [*B&W comic; $3.50*]

☐ **SAVAGE HENRY #20.**

☐ **SICK TALES #1.** BLack humor from **Dave Meaz.** [*B&W comic; $2.50; 36 pages*]

☐ **UNDERGROUND CLASSICS: Sharon Rudahl #15.**

ROCKET COMICS

☐ **TIME CITY #2.**

ROCK SOUP STUDIO

☐ **SLEEPERS BOOK III.** By **Bianca & Vetrone.** [*B&W softcover; $8.95; 60 pages*]

RUSS COCHRAN

☐ **TALES FROM THE CRYPT #7.**

SHUNGA COMIX

☐ **HONOR NEEZE AND THE NAUGHTY NURSES #3.**

SIDE SHOW COMICS

☐ **CATNIP #1.**

SLAVE LABOR

☐ **BLOOD AND WATER #2 (of 3)**

☐ **HERO SANDWICH #9.**

☐ **OBLIVION CITY #8.**

TANGRAM PUBLISHING

☐ **FANG #1.** Horror anthology by **various.** [*B&W comic; $3.95*]

THWACK! POW!

☐ **ORIGINAL SIN #4.**

TRAGEDY STRIKES

☐ **CHEESE HEADS #4.**

TUNDRA

☐ **COBALT 60 #2.**

☐ **CROW Volume 2**

☐ **THE JAM #3**

☐ **MADMAN #1.** See review this issue. By **Michael Dalton Allred.** [*B&W comic; $3.95*]

☐ **MARGOT IN BADTOWN.** Action & adventure in the European style. By **Charyn & Frezzato.** [*Color softcover; $14.95*]

☐ **SILICON HORIZON #1.** Adult science fiction from the creators of *Laundryland*. By **Forg & Bergeron.** [*B&W comic; $3.95; 48 pages*]

☐ **VIOLENT CASES.** Second Printing.

VALIANT/VOYAGER

☐ **HARBINGER #6.** One kid dies! Great, only four left to kill.

☐ **MAGNUS ROBOT FIGHTER #13.** "The Asylum Saga" Part 1.

☐ **RAI #4.**

☐ **SHADOWMAN #2.**

☐ **SOLAR, MAN OF THE ATOM #10.** Double-sized issue, featuring the climax of the origin by **Barry-Windsor-Smith.** By **Shooter, Perlin, Drake & Bolinger.** [*Color comic; $3.95*]

☐ **VINTAGE MAGNUS ROBOT FIGHTER Volume 2 #1 (of 4).** By **Russ Manning.** [*Color comic, $1.95*]

☐ **X-O MANOWAR #5.**

VISUAL INTEGRATED PRODUCTIONS

☐ **HALLOWEEN MIDNIGHT QUARTERLY #1.**

VIZ COMICS

☐ **CRYING FREEMAN PART FOUR #1 (of 7).** By **Koike & Ikegami.** [*Color comic; $4.95*]

☐ **CRYING FREEMAN GRAPHIC NOVEL: SHADES OF DEATH PART 2** [*B&W softcover; $14.95*]

☐ **SANCTUARY #1.** A Yazuka crime boss tries to take over the Japanese underworld. By **Fumimara & Ikegami.** [*B&W comic; $4.95*]

☐ **SILENT MOBIUS: PART II #4 (of 5).**

VORTEX

☐ **LEGENDS OF NASCAR: MORGAN SHEPHERD #11.**

☐ **NASCAR ADVENTURES: DAVID PEARSON #6.**

WARNER BOOKS

☐ **MAD DISASTERS.**

☐ **RIVERDALE HIGH BOOK #8.**

WARP GRAPHICS

ELFQUEST #8: KINGS OF THE BROKEN WHEEL. By **Wendy & Richard Pini.** [*Color softcover, $17.95; 160 pages*]

WATER ROW BOOKS INC.

☐ **MODERN HORROR: THE CHARLES BURNS SKETCHBOOK.**

FICTIONEER BOOKS LTD., 234 FIFTH AVE, SUITE 301, NEW YORK, NY 10001

IS FOR VALIANT

Feature by Dennis Sellers

Don't call Valiant Comics a "little" company. By the end of the summer they'll be publishing eight regular titles and two limited series with more on the way. Valiant isn't looking for its own small cubbyhole; it's going after the big boys.

"The niche we're after is the big niche: the super-hero mainstream," President Jim Shooter said. "Other new companies are trying to find their own small niche and that's fine. I'm a big *Flaming Carrot* fan, but the book's not likely to ever sell in big numbers. At Valiant, we don't see ourselves as an independent at all, but as the newest major player. Pretty soon we think it's going to be clear to everyone that we're going head to head with Marvel and DC. We won't overtake them next year, but we'll do more than just be competitive."

Titles currently selling under the Valiant logo include *Magnus Robot Fighter, Solar Man of the Atom, X-O Manowar, Rai, Harbinger,* and *Battlemania*. Another monthly will be released in early 1992 and two more this summer.

Shooter knows his way around the comics industry, having written for DC and Marvel, plus serving a long stint as Marvel's editor-in-chief. He's gathering a nucleus of talent that he feels will enable Valiant to produce the best comics of their type.

"We can do mainstream superheroes better than anyone else," he says. "We're the only ones doing a true super-hero universe. Marvel and DC can't keep unity in a coherent universe with 100-plus books a month; we can and we are."

Shooter admits Valiant needs a certain amount of "critical mass" to take off. That critical mass seems to be building as the company builds a steady line of strong-selling titles and garners attention with clever marketing gimmicks.

The Valiant History

Valiant Comics is part of Voyager Communications, which started in 1989. Shooter had recently left Marvel and teamed up with media lawyer Steven Massarsky—whose clients include Aerosmith, Cyndi Lauper and Nintendo—for a theatrical project which fell through. Though this venture didn't work out, Shooter and Massarsky worked so well as a team they started Voyager Communications with the intention of developing a line of mass market comics for the direct sales market.

Massarsky's connections paved the way for *Super Mario Brothers* and other titles based on Nintendo characters. Introduced in April 1990, the stiff-covered, $1.95 comics fared poorly in the direct markets. However, they sold well at such stores as K-Mart and Toys 'R Us, where they were discovered by the young audience to whom they were targeted.

By December 1990, Voyager decided to repackage the material into a traditional comic book format and drop the price to $1.50. Working through Warner Publishing Services, the comics were mass marketed in toy stores, department stores and newsstands. (The direct market could buy into them if they wanted, as well.) Sales were good.

In mid-December, John Hartz came on board as Voyager's marketing director. He was just in time for Voyager's decision to enter the area Shoooter admits he does better than anything else—super-hero comics.

In March 1991 the first Valiant super-hero Comic hit the stands—*Magnus, Robot Fighter*, reviving the Gold Key character from the 1960's. Shooter scripted the book and, along with Massarsky and Hartz, devised a marketing plan to make Magnus's revival stand out among the ever-proliferating number of comic books.

The first eight issues contained coupons and a series of trading cards by well known artists. Fans who collected all eight issues could send their coupons to Valiant by Dec. 31 and receive a copy of *Magnus #0*, a prequel to the revived series, plus a final trading card by Barry Windsor-Smith. The coupons were the only way to get the rare prequel, which shipped in January.

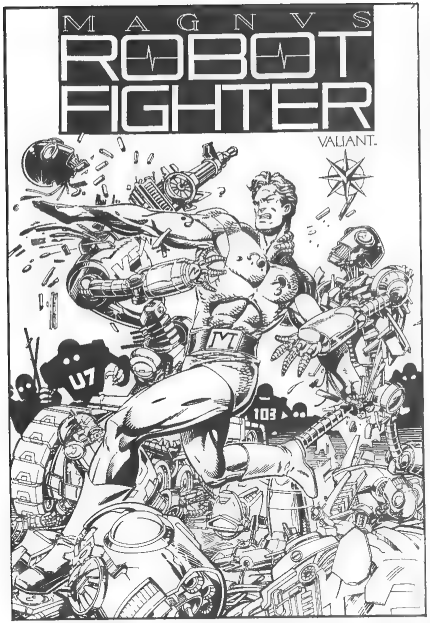
"We printed *Magnus #0* exactly to order," Hartz said. "The number of copies we printed matched the order of coupons that were sent in so it should be quite a collector's item. We considered several marketing methods, but finally decided to go the ol' Betty Crocker proof-of-purchase coupon route. The response was amazing."

The coupon gimmick had several advantages besides drawing attention to Valiant. Dealers with a large overstock of the first eight issues of *Magnus* could clip out the coupons and order copies of *Magnus #0* to sell. The issues from which the coupons were clipped could be sold, possibly at cost. The dealers would make money; fans who missed the early issues and simply wanted to read the storyline could purchase inexpensive copies, Hartz said.

"We sold about 90,000 copies of *Magnus #1* and there was a demand for more," Hartz said. "Issue #2 dropped off slightly, as we expected, but each succeeding issue's sales have continued to go up."

(Later issues of *Magnus* featured a "free" mini-series introducing a new character, Rai, who later received his own title. The unique thing was that Rai's story was printed as an upside-down "flip book" inside the main title.)

In June, Valiant revived another Gold Key character, *Solar, Man of the Atom*, also written by Shooter. To pro-



The cover to *Magnus* #0, the mail-order only prequel to *Magnus, Robot Fighter.*

mote the title, a special limited series by Windsor-Smith was inserted. Fans got 40 pages of story for $1.95 (the price of all Valiant's regular monthly titles).

The first 10 issues also feature the "world's largest panel," also by Windsor-Smith. One-tenth of a comic panel graces the centerfold of each issue. They can be placed together to form one gigantic comics panel.

Like *Magnus, Solar* is a hit.

In October, *Harbinger* #1 hit the stands. Like *Magnus*, it included coupons redeemable for *Harbinger* #0. The first issue also contained a special six-page insert story focusing on the title's main villain. Valiant's first non-licensed comic sold out within two weeks and a second printng is being considered.

Since then, *X-O Manowar, Rai*, and several special editions have been introduced in the Valiant universe, each with its own marketing ploy. Additionally, *Battlemania*, a magazine-sized comic about The World Wrestling Federation characters, is sold alongside wrestling magazines at newsstands.

"True, we do gimmicks," Hartz said. "But our basic policy is one of added value. We're not printing a comic with five different covers just to get you to buy five different copies. Magnus fans don't have to damage their comics if they just want to read each issue and enjoy the story. With our 'gimmicks', whether it's coupons, trading cards or free mini-series, you get something extra for your money.

"True, we do gimmicks," [John] Hartz says. "But our basic policy is one of added value."

The Valiant Titles:
Magnus, Robot Fighter

Introduced by Gold Key Comics in 1963, Magnus is a man whose mission is to protect humans from renegade robots in a world over 2,000 years in the future.

The original series ran 46 issues, from 1963 through 1977. Only the first 29 issues contained new material; the remaining issues were reprints. Russ Manning illustrated the first 21 issues and wrote many of the stories. After his departure a variety of artists (most notably, Dan Spiegle) took turns drawing the robot fighter. Shooter, in revamping the character, decided to ignore all stories done after Manning's stint.

The 1990's version of Magnus focuses on an alien invasion of earth, a plot thread which runs through all the titles in the Valiant universe.

Shooter will write an occasional issue and, as he does with all Valiant titles, maintain a hand in the plotting and direction of the book. The regular team will be newcomers Jorge Gonzalez as scripter and Mark Moretti as artist. Laura Hitchcock will help with the writing and Kathryn Bolinger will be the main colorist.

However, several special storylines will feature guest artists whose work may surprise some. A special issue in February will be illustrated by Gonzalo Mayo, best known for his work on *Vampirella* for Warren Comics. Mayo will team with Shooter for a storyline in which Magnus will travel through time to meet another Gold Key character, Turok, Son of Stone.

Shooter and Mayo will also team for a special eight-page insert story that will reveal the "true" origin of Magnus. The mini-series will tie in with the main storyline, yet stand alone. It will answer such questions as: Where did Magnus come from? Who are his parents? Shooter says it will reveal information about the robot fighter that's never been shown before.

"Gonzalo Mayo draws fantastically, and is particularly well suited to the Turok story," Shooter said. "We're very particular about our work and Gonzalo had never done super-heroes before, but he was willing to fly up from Miami and learn our process.

Magnus. Robot Fighter does what he does best.

We're realy pleased with the results."

Another offbeat (to some) choice for a Magnus artist is Ernie Colon, a well known pro whose work on Warren's horror titles and Marvel's *Damage Control* was exaggerated and "cartoony". Colon teamed with Shooter to do a special two-issue sequence that involves a small bit of Magnus continuity mentioned only in passing in the original comic. Shooter says Colon has spent a lot of time at Valiant, and promises that *Magnus* will show a side of his work that's never been seen.

Besides the regular *Magnus* title, Valiant has published a four-issue mini-series, *Vintage Magnus*, that presents the best of Manning's work. Two trade paperback editions, *Magnus: Steel Nation* Volumes 1 and 2, out in January, reprints the first four issues of the new series. The volumes introduce Valiant's high quality Prestige Format. The $5.95 paperbacks include pages omitted from the original issues.

"When Jim wrote *Magnus* #1-4, he was so excited and his story was so crammed that the page counts fluctuated and there wasn't any room for ads," John Hartz said. "We actually had to cut story pages from the books. The two volumes of *Steel Nation* include an extra 10 pages or so added to the entire storyline."

The two volumes also have covers that stand alone but also connect to form one big image.

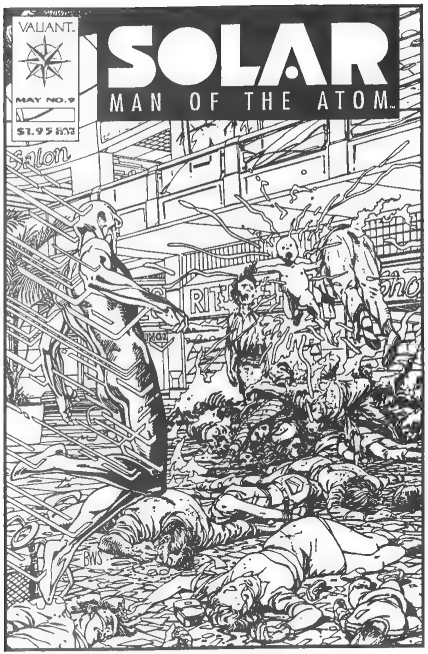
Solar, Man of the Atom

Shooter's personal favorite of the Valiant comics revamps the most powerful of all Gold Key characters. The title is the "linch pin" of the Valiant universe, Shooter said.

"This is the title they'll have to pry from my cold, dead fingers to take away from me," he said.

The original comics (known as *Dr. Solar*) debuted in 1962 and ran 31 issues. Done by a variety of artists and writers, it had no single overwhelming influence such as Russ Manning on *Magnus*.

Solar was a character with almost unlimited powers. The original creators tried to add a dash of realism to the comic (Solar didn't even have a costume for the first four issues), but missed the mark, Shooter feels. Solar would go out and save the universe with his incredible abilities, then re-



An upcoming issue of *Solar, Man of the Atom.*

turn to his regular laboratory work with little fanfare or afterthought.

"I went back and read all the original issues and thought about the intent of the creators," Shooter said. "I tried to decide what they did right and what they did wrong. While treating their work with respect, I wanted to build on the original idea. I saw their intent was to be more realistic, but the writers didn't think it through. They didn't consider the ramifications of the fantastic things Solar could do; they didn't consider how he was so god-like."

Shooter said he's attempted to incorporate the legend of Solar with a style that makes him appropriate for the '90s.

"He's going to be kind of aloof, the caretaker of the world," Shooter said. "He's going to affect all the continuity of our books and the existence of every one of our characters, which is what Superman should be doing in DC Comics."

[*Solar, Man of the Atom:*] "This is the title they'll have to pry from my cold, dead fingers to take away from me." —Jim Shooter

The regular penciller on *Solar* will be Don Perlin, known for years of work at Marvel on such titles as *The Defenders* and *Werewolf by Night*. Shooter says Perlin is one of the best storytellers in the business, though his work had gone unappreciated for years.

"At Marvel, Don was given the books with lots of characters or the books that were behind schedule," John Hartz added. "He was a pinch hitter and a real professional who always turned out dependable work on time. At Valiant, we've given him a chance to take his time and do the work to the best of his ability. People are amazed that Don can be as good as he can be."

Long time pro Stan Drake will be the regular inker "as long as he can, as much as he can," and Kathryn Bolinger will head the coloring team.

Whereas *Magnus* is set in the future, *Solar* takes place in the present. Shooter's "First Strike" storyline, now underway, is the prequel to the alien invasion storyline in *Magnus* and *Rai*.

The first issues of *Solar* include a mini-series by Windsor-Smith which will climax in #10. The tenth issue will be a "big extravaganza" with an extra long story by Windsor-Smith. The exact page count and price has yet to be determined, but Hartz said the mini-series would have a "spectacular ending."

Harbinger

Introduced last October, this is the second series that Shooter scripts regularly. Focusing on a team of superpowered youngsters, *Harbinger* had been compared to Marvel's mutant titles. Wrong, says Shooter. If it can be compared to anything, it's the *Legion of Super-Heroes* issues he wrote for DC starting when he was only 13.

"When I wrote *Legion* I wrote the characters like they were 13 because that was my perception of the world," Shooter said. "I stole the personalities of my friends for the Legionnaires' personalities. As I aged, so did the Legionaires. I like to think that all of us—myself, the Legionaires and the audience—grew up together."

Shooter wants to bring the same feeling of youth to *Harbinger* that he brought to *The Legion of Super-Heroes*. He says there's many titles around featuring young super-heroes, but none of them pull it off. They speak like teens, but carry themselves with the self-assurance and capabilities of adults.

"When I was 17, I didn't know what to do a lot of the time, and I want that feeling for *Harbinger*," he added. "All the characters are going to be like kids really are. They all won't be uniformly brave. This one's a weasel, that one's got bad personal problems. They're going to get in real trouble, they're going to hurt people as they use their powers."

Above: Windsor-Smith/Layton on *Solar*. Below: *Harbinger*.

Set in modern times, *Harbinger* features a boy named Pete (nicknamed Sting) who had only one super-power: the ability to unleash the powers of others. He opens their minds to let their fantasies come true.

The other teens in the book are:

- Flamingo, a popular, attractive cheerleader who's a little "easier" than she should be. Her power is, appropriately enough, the ability to control heat.
- Zeppelin, the other female member of the team. A big comics fan, she gains the ability to fly.
- Torque, the "strong guy" of the group whose fantasy was to be big and strong enough to kill "those people." Exactly who "those people" are will remain a mystery for now. Torque not only has a troubled past; he's also illiterate.

Shooter says that, over time, Sting will find more teens and free their latent powers. Some of the kids will be good and some will be "rats," the writer said.

The teens in the book are on a quest to stop Harada, the "villain" who may be the most logical person in *Harbinger*. With super abilities of his own, Harada uses them to accomplish personal goals.

He has used his powers—which include mind-over-matter, telekinesis, and ESP—to make money and build himself an empire. He also works behind the scenes to accomplish change in the world.

"Harada might have been behind the fall of the Berlin wall or behind Eastern Europe opening up," Shooter said. "Naturally, he doesn't see himself as a bad guy."

However, Harada does see Sting's abilities and those of his comrades as threat to himself. He sets out on a quest to destroy them just as they're out to stop him. But it's Harada who has the upper hand.

"For once, the good guys don't have the secret base, the great planes, the nifty machines," Shooter said. "Harada's the guy with the neat hardware."

While the comic will have its quota of action, Shooter says it's going to be a very "relationship oriented" book. As it focuses on kids and how they grow up, the writer has several themes he plans to work into the adventures.

"I want to show life as it is without making the stories into morality plays," Shooter said. "The problem with morality plays is that they make their point, then they're gone."

Harbinger is illustrated by penciller David Lapham and inker John Dixon. Both names are unknown to most American comics fans, though Shooter doubts they'll remain unknown much longer.

"David is a newcomer who hung around Valiant and learned quickly. He's extremely dedicated and is going to become one of the big names in this industry."

"Newcomer" Dixon is actually a seasoned pro, a native of Australia who illustrated that country's comic strip, *Airhawks*, for 28 years.

Rai

Debuting in December, *Rai* is set in the same time period as *Magnus*, the year 4001, and deals with the alien invasion that changes the world of that era.

During the alien invasion, the ultra-technological island of Japan actually knits itself into a gigantic, dragon-shaped (or, more correctly, salamander-shaped) robot. The robot rises from the sea and heads into space to join Magnus in fighting the invaders.

The aliens are defeated, but Japan is damaged and unable to return to Earth. The island reforms itself into a sphere and actually becomes a second moon to its home planet. However, it's a moon inhabited by millions of people.

In this distant future, the island of Japan is overseen by the Central Intelligence Computer. Throughout the centuries the computer has had a human guardian for protection. The computer grants its guardians powers such as the ability to generate their own weapons and the ability to travel through the computer's "nerve path."

The new Rai is ready to assume his duties, a hereditary position for which he's been raised, but the Central Intelligence Computer has been irreparably damaged during the battle with the alien fleet. The new Rai finds himself a protector with no one to protect, a warrior with no mission. So he becomes the protector, the "guardian spirit" of the people.

But how does he protect them? With their overseeing computer gone, their country radically transformed, Japan is breaking down into feuding fiefdoms, as it was centuries ago. Rai tries to play referee among the bickering factions but finds himself lacking the wisdom and experience for the job. He heads to Earth in an exploratory mission to find the answers that will heal his hurting nation. His mission will take him across the Earth of 4001.

"It's the most epic of all the books we're doing," Shooter said. "each issue is a story in itself, but they all fit together into one major storyline. It takes off from the world set up in *Magnus*."

Rai: Writer David Michelinie has 2,000 years of history to deal with.

Rai's mission is complicated by the fact that he's married and has a child. His wife leaves him over political differences and he finds himself a single father.

Writer David Michelinie's mission is also a daunting one. Not only is he responsible for chronicling Rai's epic, he's the official guardian for Valiant history.

"David's now in charge of 2,000 years of history," Shooter said. "He's got 20 centuries of history to fill in for us."

Part of that history will be a key in a major crossover storyline set for May, June, and July. All Valiant comics will be involved in the crossover, which will also pave the way for two new titles which are shrouded in secrecy for now. All that Shooter will reveal is that both series are set in the present time; one focuses on a single character, the other is a two-character book.

"This crossover will knit the Valiant universe together in a way no comics universe has ever been knit together before," Shooter said. "This summer we're going to really get people's attention."

Michelinie is well known to comics fans and currently writes *Amazing Spider-Man* for Marvel. *Rai* will be pencilled by Joseph Saint-Pierre and inked by Charles Barnett.

"Joseph is relatively new to comics, but he's very good," Shooter said.

"We're putting together a studio the likes of which hasn't been seen since the Lee-Kirby days."
—Jim Shooter

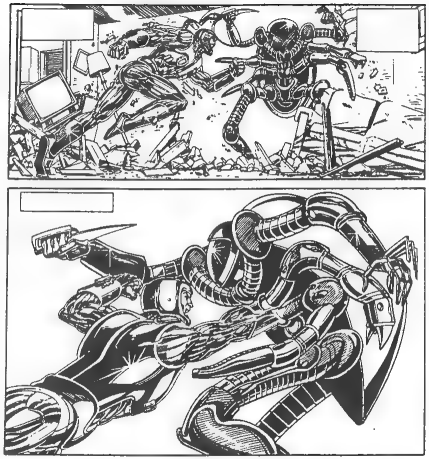
"Charles Barnett is the most accomplished artist you've never heard of. He's been inking a long time, doing studio work with Joe Sinnott and Herb Trimpe. The Saint-Pierre/Barnett artwork will probably remind people of the old *Fantastic Four*s inked by Sinnott."

X-O Manowar

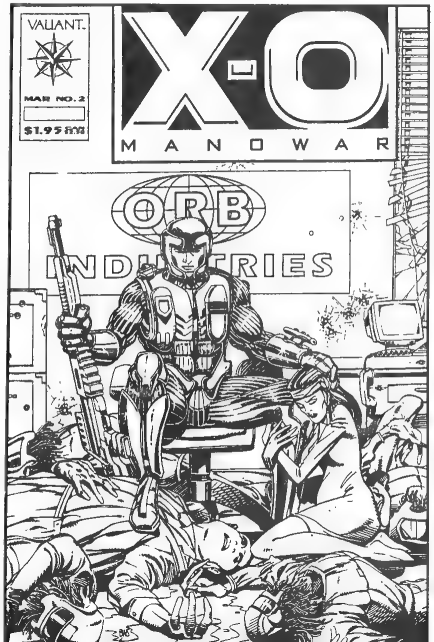
Imagine Conan the Barbarian in charge of the world's most powerful weapon and you've got a simplified picture of this comic's premise. X-O is not the name of a character, but of a suit of high tech armor developed by the aliens who figure so prominently in all the Valiant comics.

The lead character is Aric, a Visigoth captured by aliens (yes, *the* aliens) 2,000 years in the past. He and several other humans have been abducted over the years as specimens for study, kept alive by alien technology.

In the present time, Solar repels the first wave of the alien invasion, leaving some of the enemy stranded on earth. The ship in which Aric is held prisoner returns on a rescue mission. The Visigoth escapes and finds his way to the hold where several alien weapons are stored—including the top-of-the-line X-O armor.



In *X-O Manowar*, a Visigoth (you know, the guys who burned Rome) controls the world's most powerful weapon.



Aric tries to use the armor, but his primitive mind doesn't comprehend its intricacies. He ends up destroying the spacecraft, leaving still more aliens stranded on Earth.

Aric goes off to find his people who, of course, are no longer alive. The aliens are after the Visigoth to get the X-O armor back. It's so powerful they can use it to build a propulsion unit and return home. The situation: a guy with no knowledge of technology is pursued by people with superior technology.

"Aric is probably the strongest guy on earth," Shooter said. "He's a barbarian, used to surviving. He's also the most dangerous man on earth with the X-O armor in his hands. It's a good thing that basically, he's a good man."

Shooter said that *X-O* would chronicle the confilict of a man out of time as well as a conflict between enemies. The struggles Aric faces will be more realistic than any "fish out of water" stories told in comics before, he added.

"Aric's take on life is vastly different from ours," Shooter said. "He looks at nothing like we do. For example, when he runs across Harada, Aric thinks he's okay whereas most of our characters view him as a villain. Harada's a king; as far as Aric's concerned, so what if he got his kingdom by questionable means? All kings do."

Steve Englehart, who's writing the series, says the stories will be narrated by Aric. The twist is that he speaks Visigoth and no modern language, so initially he can communicate with others only through crude sign language.

"We'll be telling the stories in real time," Englehart said. "There's a month between issues so a month of time passes in the book. Aric learns bits and pieces of English as time passes so his narration becomes a little smoother.

Englehart will be playing up the aspect of Aric as an intelligent man completely out of his element, the same situation that a 20th century man might find himself in if he was dropped down in the middle of the 23rd Century. Aric, a pragmatic man, does find the modern world entertaining.

"He loves New York," Englehart said. "He thinks it's great that you can go out on the street at night and be set upon by robbers at any instant, and he thinks the skyscrapers are towers which have villains inside. Anyone who's ever visited another country knows how everything is so alien and interesting at first. That's the feeling we're trying to capture in this book."

Surprises also come with the X-O armor itself. The armor is alive, but sentient unlike anything ever seen before in comics. It's symbiotic, becoming what Aric wants it to be.

X-O Manowar, which debuted in November, is done by the creative team of Englehart, Sal Velluto and Tom Ryder. Englehart has worked for many comic book companies and is known for his writing on such books as *Batman, Coyote, Dr. Strange, Green Lantern Corps* and *Silver Surfer*. Velluto gained his experience with the Neal Adams studio and recently illustrated several issues of *Moon Knight*. Ryder is a newcomer to the industry. Assisting him on the inks will be Bob Layton, the writer-penciller-inker who's worked on many titles, especially, for Marvel. (Layton is also Valiant's production manager.)

Shadowman

Englehart will also be the writer of Valiant's newest title which hits the stands in February. David Lapham told Shooter he wanted to draw a book about a creature of the night, so Englehart worked with Shooter, Lapham and Laura Hitchcock to come up with a "creature of the night the likes of which has never been seen before," Shooter said.

The lead character is a successful young jazz musician, a night person, totally comfortable roaming the streets of his home town, New Orleans, in the wee hours of the morning. The man dresses in black—black jeans, black turtlenecks—and is a "creature of the night without the overtones of Batman and Dracula," Englehart said.

The musician's life changes when a strange, exotic woman enters the club where he plays.

"A guy picks her up and they leave together," Englehart said. "They come to the club together for a couple of nights, then the guy's gone. Another guy picks up the woman and the same thing happens. There's nothing unusual about this to the musician; it's just dating behavior in the 90's. Eventually, he picks up the woman himself."

Unfortunately, she turns out to be one of the alien race that plagues the Valiant Universe. This alien loves his music, if not him, and paralyzes him. Her plans are to genetically alter him so he can return with her to her home planet. The gene tampering is interrupted, however, when the alien has to flee. (Those who read only *Shadowman* will only know that some unnamed threat forced her to flee; readers of *X-O Manowar*, will know it's because Aric is in the neighborhood.)

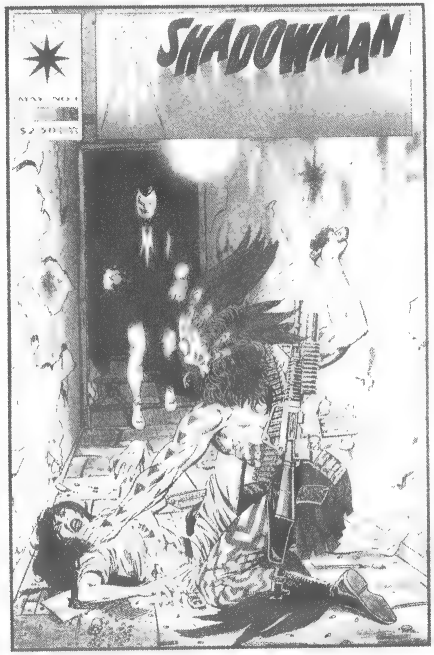
When our hero wakes up, he discovers evidence that makes him believe the woman who drugged him is a serial killer. Although he doesn't know exactly what happened to him, he knows that, somehow, he's not the same man he was. Nothing has changed about his physical appearance; it's his attitude that's changed.

He's become predatory. Where once he might have felt fear, he now feels agression. Where once he merely felt comfortable at night, now he feels invincible. Still, as he wanders the streets, he knows that evil lurks in the darkness. He considers it his personal mission in life to find people like the woman who almost killed him and to get rid of them.

The Shadowman rules the night; it's his.

Although set mostly in the French Quarter, *Shadowman* will occasionally see another city as a backdrop as the musician (whose name had not been chosen as *Amazing Heroes* went to press) travels to different locations for album work.

Shadowman will be Steve Englehart's riff on the "creature of the night."



With *Shadowman*, Englehart wants to intensify the feeling of the acclaimed Batman tales he'd written.

"One of my favorite lines from the Batman series is when he says, 'My world goes crazy sometimes.' With this new title, I plan to up the craziness quotient and lower the humor quotient.

"Shadowman won't take on all the characteristics of his enemies, but he will take on some of them. When the Valiant heroes meet, Shadowman will be the dark one of the crowd. The others are going to find him disturbing because his world is dark and disturbing."

The villains in the book are also disturbing. The first issue will introduce a recurring enemy who will probably never even be given a name. He's the ultimate psychopath, so psychotic that he's lost his own identity. Every time he appears, he's like a completely different person.

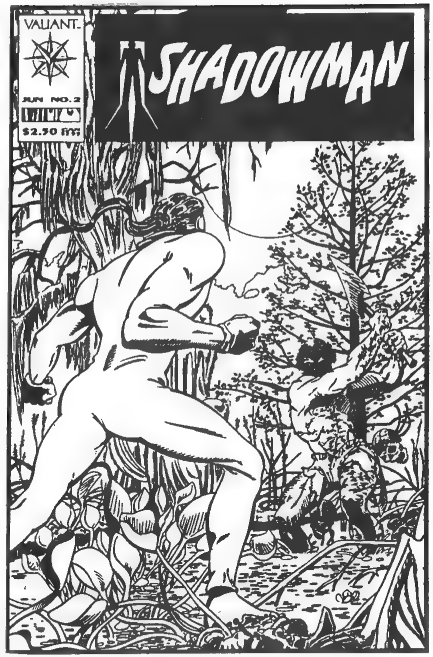
"This is a dark and powerful series," Shooter said. "It's done with an edge that's never been attempted before. Englehart is serious about this stuff."

Shooter says it's also going to be the first time a milieu has ever been done correctly in comics. Due to extensive research (Lapham has traveled to New Orleans to take photographs for reference) and the input of Massarsky, the setting and action will be correct.

"People in the newspaper business know that the journalistic world of Peter Parker and Clark Kent isn't real," Shooter said. "Our depiction of the jazz scene will be realistic. The first issue will even feature a guest appearance by a well known musician."

The attention to detail in *Shadowman* accomplishes one of Shooter's goals at Valiant: to add a dash of realism to the comics. There'll be no big, special "KABOOM" sound effects. All women won't look like Miss America and all men won't look like Hercules, Shooter said.

And the aliens don't even have names because, Shooter reasons, if an alien host actually invaded Earth earthlings would never understand their language to know what the aliens called themselves.



Cover to *Shadowman* #2.

[*Shadowman*:]
"A creature of the night the likes of which has never been seen before."
—Jim Shooter

The Best of Turok

Two 48-page, Prestige Format trade paperbacks ($4.95 each) released in January and February reprint the best of the adventures of the "Son of Stone." Another Gold Key character, Turok was a member of an Indian tribe trapped in a valley of dinosaurs.

"The first few issues of the original *Turok* series are collectors items, but quite a bit of the art and stories were pretty lame," John Hartz said. "Basically, *Turok* was a one-trick pony: he'd fight a dinosaur and he'd beat a dinosaur. But around the 24th or 25th issue, an artist named Alberto Gioletti started doing the majority of the stories. He's considered the definitive Turok artist and his work is gorgeous."

Gioletti's work is showcased in the *Best of Turok* volumes. Valiant staffers went through all the issues of the original series to find the seven or eight best stories for reprinting. Gioletti's work will be recolored by Valiant's coloring staff. Hartz says the results are "fantastic." Each trade paperback will also reprint three to five covers of original issues.

The two trade paperbacks and a guest appearance in *Magnus, Robot Fighter* are all that's planned for Turok. Unless, of course, sales are

good and readers request the return of the Son of Stone.

"Jim has a script already written that updates the character and makes him more contemporary," Hartz said. "The script overcomes the limitations of the original series and turns it into more of a time travel story. It also makes the series more historically accurate and opens up several possibilities. There are no definite plans, but we've kicked around ideas about who a good artist might be."

Battlemania

Set outside the regular Valiant universe, this magazine-sized comic was designed specifically for newsstand distribution. (However, like all Valiant titles, it's also offered to the direct sales market.) The magazine features those colorful, real-life folk of the World Wrestling Federation.

"The philosophy behind *Battlemania* is to turn WWF fans into comic fans and not vice-versa," Hartz said. It seems to be working. The magazine sells 300,000 copies a month, with one a third of those sales coming from England, a figure Hartz calls "phenomenal."

Battlemania is done by a variety of writers and artists. The legendary Steve Ditko had done quite a bit of work for the title, as have Valiant mainstays, Stan Drake and Joseph Saint-Pierre. Laura Hitchcock has done most of the writing, but Shooter himself has written a few wrestling tales.

"I'm not sure I'm the best writer for this, but it's a lot of fun. I had a blast doing it," Shooter said. "The magazine is closely coordinated with WWF. So far the stories have mostly been self-contained, but we're going for a bit more continuity from issue to issue because we feel that's what the WWF fans want."

The wrestling tales and old Nintendo material have also been repackaged for Western Publishing, which distributes them to toy stores and mass market outlets under the imprint of Valiant Illustrated Action Books. Sold as small, squarebound, 48-page books at $2.95 each, the sales have been excellent. Western has taken 600,000 copies of four WWF books and 400,000 copies of four Nintendo books.

THE VALIANT WORKPLACE

"We have an incredibly talented staff of people and we're putting together a studio the likes of which hasn't been seen since the Lee-Kirby days," Shooter says.

That studio includes a staff of 18-full timers and several freelancers that are a mixture of seasoned pros and talented newcomers. Shooter points to Ditko, Drake, Windsor-Smith, Layton, Perlin, Englehart, Micheline, Janet Jackson ("the best colorist in the business") and others as time-tested talent. Valiant's "discoveries" are top-of-the-line, Shooter says, adding that the company is dedicated to helping up-and-coming talent.

In May-June-July, all Valiant comics will be involved in a crossover. Two new titles will premiere.

"We're uniquely equipped to find new talent and help them along in a way that no other company is doing right now," Shooter said. "Valiant is the only place where talent is actively big developed. I started that at Marvel, but we can do it a lot better here because we're a smaller shop. Because we have artists on staff, we can work with new talent. A new inker can do an underpainting for Janet Jackson because she's sitting right there."

In fact, Shooter said he's rather have an up-and-coming talent than an old pro who has been mediocre forever.

"I'd rather have the 'new Frank Miller' who needs some work than someone who's been middle of the road for years," he said. "Take Jorge Gonzalez, for example. He started here as a colorist and got to be one of the best in the business. Then he showed me some of his writing samples. They were good and showed promise so now he's writing for us as well."

Valiant uses its staff to run a studio set-up in which everyone had input on all comics. A title might have one main inker, but each inker in the studio might ink some of the book. If someone's especially good at inking cars, he might ink the cars while an inker specializing in buildings might do the buildings in the same book.

Shooter says when he came to Valiant he was given a private office. He had the walls ripped out because he wanted to be able to see all his staff and be seen by them.

"I wanted to be in eraser throwing range of Bob Layton," Shooter said. "In the early days of Marvel, Stan Lee would round up everyone—and I mean EVERYONE—and say, 'What do you think ought to happen to Iron Man this month?' So everyone cared what happened to Iron Man that month and it was a great place to work."

The end result of that work is to create comics that people read for enjoyment.

"I've been doing comics for 26 years and I'm comfortable doing mainstream entertainment," he said. "Here at Valiant, we want to be entertainers first and foremost. We hope that ours are the books that people read. That's the way to be successful—to entertain people."

Then, as an afterthought, he adds, "We don't want our books put into plastic bags and filed away until after they've been read and enjoyed." ●

"This crossover will knit the Valiant universe together in a way no comics universe has ever been knit together before."
—Jim Shooter

SOUTHERN KNIGHTS
by Henry Vogel
#25 COVER PROOF ART: PEPPERS $5
#26 COVER PROOF ART: RUTKOWSKI $3
#27 COVER PROOF ART: JOE PHILLIPS $3
#28 COVER PROOF ART: PEPPERS $3
#29 COVER PROOF ART: VARIOUS $3
#30 COVER PROOF ART: VARIOUS $3
#31 COVER PROOF ART: VARIOUS $3
#32 COVER PROOF ART: SHERMAN $3
#33 COVER PROOF ART: PALMER $3
#34 COVER PROOF ART: PEPPERS $5
PRIMER COVER PROOF $3
SPECIAL COVER PEPPERS $3
ABRIDGED VERSION OF ISSUE #'S 1-7 (FROM #0)
8 NEW PIN-UPS BY ROBERT ATKINS, PETER HOEY, HENRY VOGEL & WILLIE PEPPERS
Connie Ronnin — wielder of the psychic sword.
#1 SUPER TEAM OF THE SOUTH!
FICTIONEER BOOKS LTD., 234 FIFTH AVE, SUITE 301, NEW YORK, NY 10001

DO THE FREDDY

A Freddy Krueger fan might ask: Why an origin story for Freddy Krueger? After all, the movies have already done that, haven't they?

Mangels, currently the only writer authorized to come up with Freddy Krueger, explains: "*Freddy's Dead* touched on it y'know. It went into little bits of it. It didn't show the entire thing and it contradicted itself all over the place. Actually, it didn't contradict itself as a movie—it contradicted previous movies."

And so it has come to Innovation and Andy Mangels to set the record straight.

Origin Mix-Ups

"When I was down in Los Angeles last week (the interview took place on November 15th), I had some meetings with executives from New Line Cinema, and we discussed what was and wasn't in Freddy's origin—what I would keep and not keep, what I would change and not change in the mythology of Freddy as it currently exists."

As the movie series developed, bits and pieces were added to the mythos. Unfortunately, since they were written by different people, contradictory bits got to the big screen. Then came the TV series, which supposedly began with the origin of Mr. Krueger. Sadly, since the series producers were not allowed to work with any of the movie characters other than Robert Englund's dream demon, they pretty much had to produce more contradictions. To add to the confusion, three different books and the Marvel Comics series (cancelled after the second issue—even though four were completed), provided further explorations of Freddy's origin—none of which meshed with the movies.

So, the first issue of *A Nightmare on Elm Street: The Beginning* will soon hit the stands and Freddy fans will finally learn the true story of how their favorite dream demon came to be.

Mangels' Final Cut

Another factor that makes *A Nightmare on Elm Street: The Beginning* special, is that (as mentioned above), there are no plans for another Freddy movie. You've heard this before and seen sequels happen, but Mr. Mangels notes: "When I was in meetings (at New Line) I asked them right up front. I said that I needed to know if they were bringing Freddy back because it would conflict with what I want to do in the comic. "They specifically said that they were not even talking about doing another movie. If they were going to be doing another movie in the next five years, they would be planning it now."

So, yes, Innovation (with Mangels) will continue to produce the only authorized Freddy material for the foreseeable future.

Mangels has been involved with the comics version of Freddy for about three years now. In fact, his Nightmare books have allowed him to overcome some serious frustrations. He wrote three issues for the Blackthorne version, and the art for the *Nightmare on Elm Street 3-D* issue was completed just before the company went bankrupt. He sold Marvel a plot for its fifth issue, and the book was cancelled after the second. After those experiences, needless to say, Mangels is very happy to be here crunching deadlines on his own Freddy books.

Readers of the Innovation *Elm Street* will have noticed that there is a definite combination of art and prose styles on Mangels' books. "My scripts are, or so I've heard from the artists, very easy to work from. They are geared towards being artistically interesting. I'll write down specific directions: use this camera angle and this is why; do this little visual trick—it will impress the readers; and so on. So the visual style of my books is literally a combination of me and the artist.

"There's a sequence in *Nightmares on Elm Street #2* that is a good example. Freddy is in an unidentified place that we are led to believe is the pre-existence. There is a lot of unborn children there. It's like Freddy is invading and they tear him apart. When they do, all these little children, all blond and pretty and dressed in white,

NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET:

THE BEGINNING

BY SHELDON WIEBE

Freddy Krueger in his finely-rendered (by Dan and Dave Day) Wonderland.

turn into doves and fly off. The page is so interesting visually, and the artist captured so much of what I wanted there. How do you get the same in prose? You just can't. And in a movie it would be a special effects nightmare. In a comic, though, it's a perfect blend of written word—if I've done my job correctly—and art."

Speaking of art, at the time we did the interview, no art team had been assigned to the book. Innovation publisher David Campiti is looking at samples from Guy Burwell (full paintings) who has done a few issues of *Leatherface* for Comico, and the team of David and Day Day (who, as Mangels puts it, "have done *lots* of stuff"). If Burwell gets the assignment, the series will run bi-monthly. If the Days get it, it will run monthly.

The Family Plot

So, what's it about?

As Mangels notes, at the end of each movie in the series, there have been a number of survivors of Freddy's nightmarish machinations. In the regular series, Mangels had been addressing the question of what happens next to these survivors.

"With *Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare*, it screamed to me that they could do a sequel if they really wanted to, and turn it in a whole new direction," says Mangels. The character played by Lisa Zane—in the movie her name is Maggie Burnham—is actually Katherine Krueger, the daughter of Freddy Krueger.

"Now, let's do some background for people who haven't seen the movie. First, Freddy has been confined to the town of Springwood for the first five movies, so he lures his daughter back to town and enters her mind. Now he is free to go wherever he wants. Hence the catchline, 'Every Town has an Elm Street.'

"Toward the end of the movie, Maggie enters his mind and becomes one with his memory. She witnesses what his growing up was like; what his memories are. Then she brings him out of the dream and proceeds to have a big fight and kill him. During the fight he makes several references to the fact that, 'You're my blood! Put the glove on! doesn't it feel good? It's in you! Don't you feel it?' Perhaps the Krueger blood is tainted somehow, or maybe his insanity could have been passed on to her. That just screamed out to me: This is something to deal with! This is rife with plot possibilities!

"If I were running New Line, and looking for another sequel, I'd say, 'Okay, we're done with Freddy Krueger—let's go with Katherine Krueger now.' And that is exactly where I'm taking the origin story."

The Plot Thickens

Amazing Heroes Preview Special fans take note: the following is an *AHPS*-style overview of the series.

In the first issue, Maggie/Katherine starts having flashbacks (understand that Freddy's been in her mind and she has been in his. . .) uncontrollable flashbacks into her father's memories, and now she starts reliving his life. She goes back to Springwood to figure out how and why Freddy became what he did. Each issue will have a theme that will go progressively from the first issue, which is very rooted in the real world, and in which we learn about his growing up, his wife and daughter, when he first started killing children, and so on.

The second issue begins to move, a little, into the bizarre, with Freddy being tracked down by the parents and burned to death in the boiler room. He becomes a supernatural being, and we'll begin to find out why. The third issue will be very bizarre. Here we will find out who trained Freddy to use his dream manipulation powers, what his realm is like and where it came from. In the final movie, we were introduced to the dream demons (which, Mangels says, have been labelled "dream sperm" by the artists. "They look like evil sperm!" [*laughter*]) Their true form will be revealed. We will also learn who and what they are and what they have to offer Freddy.

In all, issue three will be Mangels' "Mr. Krueger Goes to Hell" story. "I'm hoping," he says, "that the third issue will strike readers as being as weird as any Clive Barker story."

The final issue finds Freddy having learned to manipulate dreams and will deal with how he starts to manipulate the dreams of Springwood's residents. There will be "some kind of resolution of what's going on with Maggie/Katherine," says Mangels, "but it may not be the resolution everyone thinks (or hopes) it will be." After all, there will be more *Nightmare on Elm Street* books.

Elm Street Themes

Mangels will continue to use some of the movies recurring ideas. "Every *Nightmare on Elm Street* movie has had a female protagonist who has beaten Freddy," he points out. "That says something very strong, right there—that the female characters are always the strongest in a *Nightmare on Elm Street* movie. You could almost call them feminist horror movies—although the folks at New Line would probably scream if they heard me say that!

"The Freddy movies have never shied away from big issues. In *Nightmare on Elm Street 5*, I found the discussion on whether the unwed pregnant teenager was going to have an abortion or keep the child very shocking because there was some very important information being tossed out in a very mainstream horror movie. The movies have also touched on drinking and driving and other hot topics of the day. And while some of it may have been done off-handedly—it was still there."

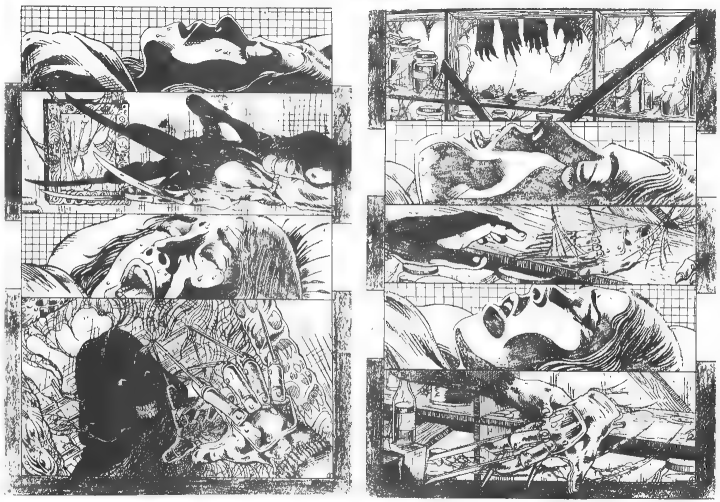
Another central theme that Mangels will touch on is that the children are aware of what's going on while the parents remain oblivious. This is a theme that frequently recurs in fantasy and horror. "Look at *Peter Pan*," says Mangels. "Because the children believe, they are part of the magic. The parents don't and are cut off from it.

"The Freddy movies explore the darker side of that imagination, as do the comics to a lesser extent. The children's imaginations (and because they believed in what Freddy was doing) were what was killing them. It was the parents' steadfast belief in only reality that prevented them from dealing with the problem. The sixth movie was the first time that the parents actually began to understand what was going on and tried to deal with it. In the comics, I've gone more toward that angle.

The Joy of Fear

"No matter how you look at it, imagination is one of the most wonderful things we've got. In *Nightmare*, I look at the darker side of the imagination and explore what happens when our fears become a part of that alternate reality we've created."

The ominous opening pages of *Nightmare on Elm Street: The Beginning*.



A heart-warming pencil portrait of Freddy at home with a little friend.

Mangels goes on to cite an example of how one of his phobias was put to use in the first issue of *Nightmares on Elm Street*. "I never learned to sew because I was always afraid of getting my had caught in the sewing machine. One of my characters was a seamstress. Her fear was not the same as mine, because she was used to working with the machine. Her fears concerned her first big show as a fashion designer and losing her lover. Freddy takes those fears and manipulates them in her dreams and creates for her a world that's everything she fears. Once he's got control of her, he utilizes her fears to destroy and does so with her sewing machine—the one thing she was not afraid of, and," laughs Mangels, "in exactly the manner of my phobia."

Of course, even with all the recurring themes, the object of the exercise is still to scare the pants off the reader. Mangels tries to make his stories work on three levels: the intellectual, the emotional, and the visceral. "Intellectually," he says, "I want the reader to think that this is an interesting story. Emotionally, I want the reader to be bothered/excited/repelled/scared. Viscerally, I want the reader to feel that hollowness in the pit of the stomach that good horror engenders."

It is Mangels' contention that fans of Clive Barker, Nancy Collins, the Alan Moore—Rick Veitch *Swamp Thing*, and *Sandman*, will find *A Nightmare on Elm Street: The Beginning* to be very worthwile fare. He says that the series is aimed at "people who like horror that explores more interesting themes than just death and terror. I think that they will find it here if they can just get past the title."

Many Mangels

Andy Mangels (pronounced, as you'd expect, "mangles") describes himself as a good Mormon boy from Bigfork, Montana with an alternative lifestyle.

The question for fans might be why Andy Mangels is doing *Nightmare on Elm Street: The Beginning*, but where he finds the time. Mangels is the new editor of *Gay Comix* (as of #14), has written 11 issues of *Child's Play* (over three limited series) and has just wrapped up *Annie Sprinkle is Miss Timed* (an X-rated time-travel mini-series.) He has also just finished a six-issue *Nightmares on Elm Street* series for Innovation, sold a plot to *Superboy* (for #24—the book got cancelled as of #22), and placed a story in *Born to be Wild*, the animal rights book. He also writes columns for *Fantazia*, *Wizard* and *Marvel Age Magazine*, and of course, *Amazing Heroes*.

There is also a children's book, a sequel to *Peter Pan*, that is due out sometime in mid-1993, timed to coincide with Mangels' most ambitious comics project to date: *Peter Pan and Wendy* for Tundra. *Peter Pan and Wendy* is, as Mangels puts it, "A three-issue graphic novel/mini-series." The book is pencilled by Craig Hamilton, inked by Rick Bryant and painted by Julia Lacquement and is scheduled for August, 1993. (It will be preceded by a series of limited edition posters, trading cards and so on.)

Then there's Innovation's *Dark Shadows* (issues #9-12), where Mangels fulfills a long-time dream of doing a werewolf story by introducing Quentin Collins into the series. Mangels is also doing the first authorized sequel to a *Quantum Leap* TV episode in *Quantum Leap* #8, a follow-up to "Good Night, Dear Heart" which deals with gay and lesbian issues in what Mangels refers to as "my most overtly gay story to date."

The Beginning Or... The Beginning?

Of course, Freddy fans can rest assured that this will not be the last *Nightmare* book. Innovation looks to be prepared to pick up their option on the *Nightmare on Elm Street* license, and there are a number of things in the works for new series, specials and international distribuion.

Nightmares on Elm Street is due for British editions from Titan Books and a number of European countires are bidding for the rights to the series.

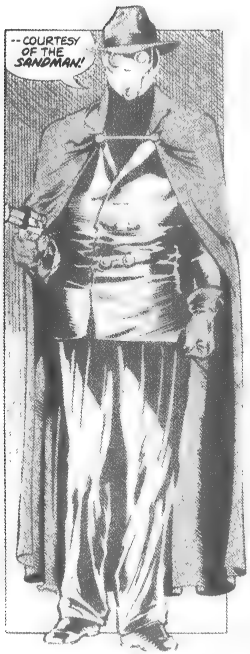
A limited series reprinting the first Marvel stories (and the two unpublished tales) in color is being discussed. Mangels would edit the series and make appropriate changes as well as contribute original material.

And then there's the possibilty of a two company crossover featuring Freddy versus a creepy crimefighter who has been known to inspire a few nightmares amongst the criminal element.

For now, there is *A Nightmare on Elm Street: The Beginning*. It sounds like more good, goulish fun from the happily demented mind of Andy Mangels. Look for it in March at your local purveyor of fine graphic fiction. ●

COMICS AND STORIES THAT WILL BLOW YOUR MIND
CRUCIAL fiction
JULIAN LAWRENCE.
A MAJOR NEW TALENT.
FIRST ISSUE AVAILABLE IN FINE COMIC SHOPS IN DECEMBER.
FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS
YOU'VE READ PULP FICTION-- YOU'VE STUDIED NON-FICTION-- YOU'VE PERUSED SCIENCE FICTION-- NOW THRILL TO CRUCIAL FICTION!

DREAM, DREAM, DREAM!



A Hero History of the Sandman by Steven Miller

Over the years, DC Comics have brought us many distinct characters who used the same name –the three Flashes, for example. There are, however, few characters have been so different as the three that have been known as the Sandman.

The Tale of the First Sandman

The Sandman was the third masked hero to be published by the trinity of publishers that eventually would become DC Comics. *The World Encyclopedia of Comics* credits the creation of the character to writer Gardner Fox and artist Bert Christman, but the early stories were credited to the pseudonym Larry Dean. The first Sandman story saw print in *Adventure Comics* #40 (1939), hot on the heels of the Batman and the Crimson Avenger. A fine example of the Golden Age comic book detective story, this tale has been reprinted in *Justice League of America* #91 (1971).

The Sandman immediately caught the readers' fancy, and was quickly promoted to cover feature. Like many Golden Age heroes, however, he was never given a proper origin. Actually, almost every major event in the Sandman's career happened "off-camera," and creators have gone in years later and bridged the gaps with "retroactive continuity" (a term coined by a fan on the letters page of *All-Star Squadron*).

An obvious example of this is the origin story that Roy Thomas, together with artist Michael Bair, put together for *Secret Origins* #7 (1986). Thomas drew upon elements previously established in the Sandman series, and in the character's appearance in *World Fair Comics* (1939), but also tied it into the Crimson Avenger's origin.

Rich, but dissatisfied with the empty life he led, socialite Wesley Dodd became worried when two masked men, the Phantom of the Fair and the Crimson Avenger, appeared in New York. He learned that the king and queen of England were to visit New York for the 1939 World Fair, and, concerned that these mystery men might attack the royal couple, he himself became a mystery man. He put on his green suit, a purple opera cape, and hid his face behind a blue-and-yellow gas mask. He completed the outfit with matching orange gloves and snap-brimmed fedora, and entered the night with the comment: "This ensemble. . .will make everybody figure the wearer's got to be color blind."

Dodd realized this was a great change for him. In an instant he had become a man of action where before he had been "staring at the sands of time running out." This inspired him to call himself the Sandman.

Aside from his fists, the Sandman initially used two tools to aid him in his fight against crime: a roadster (the Sandmobile?) and a gas gun that shot violet scented sleeping gas. Upon dispatching a crook to dreamland with a faceful of gas, he would sprinkle sand on the unconscious body to let everybody know that the Sandman was watching. He revealed his dual identity to his girlfriend Dian Belmont, who then aided him indirectly by providing excuses for the disappearances of Wesley Dodd just before the appearances of the Sandman.

In a an important Fox-Christman story in *Adventure Comics* #51, 1940, the Sandman found himself in deep trouble with the law, as sand he sprinkled at a burglary in Wesley Dodd's mansion ended up framing him for murder. Dodd continued his crimefighting career hunted by both bad guys and New York's Finest, and his popularity with readers continued to grow.

The Justice Society and the All-Star Squadron

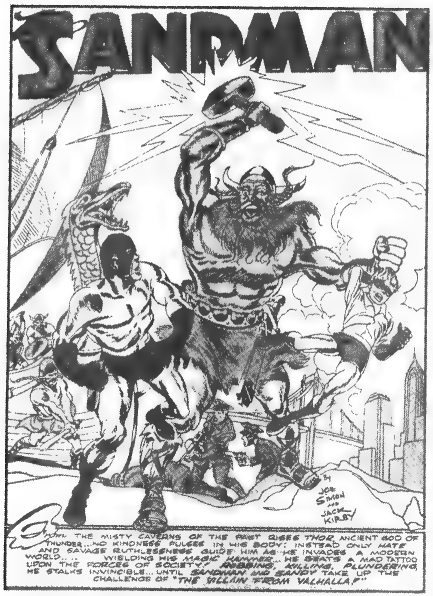
When DC launched *All-Star Comics* in the summer of 1940, the Sandman appeared in the first issue and was even featured on the cover. He was a staple of *All-Star Comics* for the next 21 issues, but the most important event of this stint took place in issue #3, when the Sandman became a charter member of the Justice Society of America. In this issue, *All-Star*'s feature characters met for dinner in a framing sequence, and swapped stories about their recent exploits. With issue #4, the format was to stay with the book for the wartime years, which are roughly the Sandman's appearances within the pages as well.

An introductory sequence related the meeting of the heroes and their being informed of the task that lay ahead of them. A number of chapters featuring heroes on their own then followed, and the story was wrapped up with them all banding together to achieve final victory.

However it wasn't until *DC Special* #27 (1977) that Paul Levitz and Joe Staton produced "The Untold Origin of the Justice Society," which has since been slightly revised by Thomas and Bair in *Secret Origins* #31. In this tale, the Sandman, together with the rest of the heroes of the Justice Society, traveled to Europe to stop Hitler from invading Great Britain in November 1940. The Sandman fought atop the cliffs of Dover, and, together with the British army, repelled the German storm troopers.

The Big Change

With *Adventure Comics* #69 (1941), there was a sudden change in the look of the strip. Between issues #68 and 69 the Sandman was reshaped from a Shadow/Green Hornet—inspired character to fit the increasingly popular mold of the Batman. The car, the clashing outfit, and gas mask were replaced by a "wirepoon" (a gun which fired a metal barb connected to a strong line of wire) and a set of yellow-and-purple tights. The girlfriend Dian had also vanished from the scene, replaced by a kid sidekick named Sandy the Golden Boy. Sandman was also elevated from a suspected criminal to a well-respected



The Simon & Kirby Sandman from the Golden Age (with his side-kick, Sandy).

crimefighter, whose aid was often sought by law enforcers and laymen alike. Wrought by the highly successful team of Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, all these changes happened without warning or explanation, as was often the case in those innocent, pre-continuity days.

All-Star Squadron #18 (1983), by Thomas and Adrian Gonzales, explained the switch. The Sandman was out of town, so Dian dressed up in his costume, hoping her very appearance would scare some saboteurs. However, a lucky shot punctured one of the roadster's tires, causing Dian to fatally crash. The Sandman, finding his outfit gone, quickly donned a costume she had designed for him, but which he hadn't liked. However, when he found Dian's body, he vowed to wear the yellow-and-purple costume in memory of her, and because it would be too painful to wear the uniform that had cost the life of his love.

Over the years, the background background of sidekick Sandy was fleshed out. Sandy Hawkins was Dian Belmont's cousin. He was orphaned at an early age and had been in his aunt's care until her death. He was a great admirer of the Sandman, often pretending to be his hero when playing, dressed in a red-and-gold costume of his own design. After Sandy assisted Sandman on a case, the hero took the boy under his wing, making the Golden Boy his sidekick, and Sandy Hawkins his ward.

A more subtle change during the Simon and Kirby tenure was the strip's movement away from its mystery roots and firmly into the realm of super-hero fantasy. The first bad guy Simon and Kirby pitted the "sombulianic duo" against was the Villain from Valhalla, an insane professor of metallurgy who believed himself to be Thor and ran around dressed like a Viking (this story was reprinted in *Forever People* #6, 1972), a fairly big change from the garden variety extortionists and robbers the Sandman fought earlier.

The Sandman never became a major hero, but his series did last until *Adventure* #102, when he was replaced by the flashier Dr. Mid-Nite. The character was never to carry a solo series again.

Obscurity on Earth-2

Shortly after DC editor Julie Schwartz spearheaded the super-hero revival of the late '50s/early '60s, writer Gardner Fox had come up with an idea that made it possible to bring back the characters he had written years earlier. All the Golden Age heroes lived on Earth-2, a world almost like our own but existing in a different dimension. The main difference between the two worlds was that the Earth-2 super-heroes had all started their careers during World War II, while super-heroes didn't emerge until the 1960s on ours.

In *Justice League of America* #27 (1962), the Justice Society returned to team up with the Justice League. Comics readers thought these team-ups were the best thing since roller skates, and the JLA/JSA team-ups became an annual tradition for 22 years. The JSA was even so popular that DC revived *All-Star Comics* in 1975 (starting with issue #58, picking up where the numbering of the original series had ended in 1951), and gave the Golden Age team the starring spot.

The most interesting aspect of the revived JSA was the fact that these heroes were brought back with grey hairs, families, and adult children. Unfortunately, the age aspect of the JSA was for the most part never exploited properly. Most of the JSAers had aged so gracefully that they could fight the members of the JLA, their juniors by 10 to 20 years, to a standstill time and again.

The Sandman, however, was an exception. The years had not been gentle to him at all. Because of this he was one of the most interesting members of the JSA, even if he rarely played a pivotal role in the team-ups.

The Sandman and Sandy remained active throughout the war, as both Justice Society and All-Star Squadron members. In 1947, the pair was testing a new weapon for the Sandman's arsenal—a silicoid gun—when it backfired and transformed Sandy into a grotesque, rampaging monster with earthquake powers. The strain of transformation made Sandy pass out. The Sandman imprisoned him in a gas-filled glass chamber that kept Sandy comfortable but unconscious for years. As detailed by Len Wein and Dick Dillin in *JLA* #113 (1974), the Sandman once again blamed himself for the demise of a beloved friend, and returned to his original costume. However, later that same year, he retired as a crimefighter after suffering a heart attack. He retreated to his mansion to attempt to find a cure for Sandy.

He did return to action with the rest of the JSA on occasion—making his first modern appearance in *JLA* #47 (1964)—but mostly he was merely part of the background tapestry of mob scenes.

As shown in *JLA* #113 as well, Sandy's imprisonment was ended when an earthquake shattered his glass prison. He escaped and used powers which had come with his transformation to absorb seismic vibrations that threatened the city. After the threat had ended, Sandy told the Sandman that he regained his sanity and self-control soon after his transformation. The already guilt-ridden Sandman found himself further-burdened by the realization that he had imprisoned Sandy for no reason, and this would be the last time he would wear his uniform for years.

In a two-part backup story in *DC Comics Presents* #42 and 47 (1982), we learn that the Sandman had placed Sandy in a hospital to better facilitate the search for a cure to his condition. In the meantime, a psychiatrist used hypnosis to make Sandman to forget all about his secret identity and the mental anguish that had built up around it. However, he regained his memory in time to stop a villain called Shatterer who had kidnapped, and then succeeded in transforming Sandy back to a human boy with his earthquake powers intact. The pair walked off into the rising sun, the Sandman wondering if there was a place for him in the modern world.

It turned out that this was his last act as an active super-hero, as he suffered a stroke which partially paralyzed him. He spent his final years walking with a cane, merely a shadow of the man he had once been.

In the one-shot *Last Days of the Justice Society of America* (1986), the Sandman and Sandy made what is most likely to be their last appearance in a move that is perhaps the most wasteful of all changes DC has wrought upon its continuity following *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. The issue, scripted by Roy Thomas and pencilled by David Ross, details how the JSA goes to Valhalla to prevent Ragnarok. There, the team, minus Dr. Fate, Spectre, Power Girl, and the Star-Spangled Kid, merged with the Norse gods and get trapped in a time-loop that, if broken, will result in the destruction of the universe.

SOMEWHERE BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH, THERE IS A PLACE WHERE DREAMS ARE BORN AND MONITORED. THIS IS THE DOMAIN OF A LEGENDARY FIGURE, ETERNAL AND IMMORTAL, WHO SHARES WITH MAN AND BEAST ALL THE SECRETS OF THE AGES...
IN
PANIC IN THE DREAM STREAM
SAND MAN
WE'RE NOT LICKED YET, JED! NOT AS LONG AS YOU'VE GOT YOUR YO-YO!
YA-WHATRE WE GONNA DO, SANDMAN? WHOSE CREEPIES OUTNUMBER US AT LEAST A HUNDRED TO ONE!!
YO-YO!?! I'D...? I BETTER GET WITH IT! SANDMAN, THIS IS AN ALIEN INVASION! WE GOT ON OUR HANDS, NOT SHOW AND TELL!
ART: JACK KIRBY AND MIKE ROYER
EDITOR: JOE ORLANDO SCRIPT: MICHAEL FLEISCHER

In the '70s, Kirby re-designed the Sandman, radically changing the character.

And you thought Robin had it tough!

The text-piece introducing the story, Thomas says that it was decided in editorial conference that the JSA, as a group of aging super-heroes, was redundant in the reformed DC Universe, and as such had to be dispensed with. Where I can some logic in this, Sandman and Sandy had a lot of mileage on them yet, and to shunt them into limbo with the rest of the JSA was a terrible waste. Neither of them had been given much exposure since the '50s, nor did they have a proper Earth-1 counterpart.

The Coming of the Second Sandman

The second Sandman made his first appearance in *Sandman* #1, billed on the cover as "A Simon and Kirby Special." Initially, this Sandman was not intended to live beyond the one-shot, which was supposed to be an example of what the famous Joe Simon and Jack Kirby team would look like 20 years after their last co-appearance (without Simon inking, however—instead it was Mike Royer who, together with D. Bruce Berry, inked all of Kirby's stuff in the early '70s).

AND THROUGH THAT DARK, WHIRLING PORTAL LEAPS A GRIM BUT BRIGHTLY-CLAD FIGURE...
RELEASE HER, FIEND!
YOU'VE TRESPASSED BEYOND YOUR RIGHTFUL SPHERE--
--AND THE SANDMAN IS HERE TO SEND YOU BACK AGAIN!

Sandman, as drawn by Colan, in *Wonder Woman* #300.

The tale spun in the special was one of a red-and-gold garbed masked man who supervised the dreams and nightmares of children around the world, especially a boy named Jed. In his hi-tech headquarters, the Dream Dome, located at Dream Stream, the point where all dreams originate, Sandman was aided by two nightmare creatures named Brute and Glob, who seemed to be of a particularly nasty sort: the Sandman kept them in glass cages, only letting them out in the most dire emergencies by using his "hypersonic whistle," which functioned as a Deux ex Machina as well. The other main weapon in his arsenal was cartridges of sleep-inducing sand. The three policed the Dream Stream, retrieving nightmare creatures that broke into reality and repelling meddling humans that invaded the realm.

No one at DC had really figured on the second Sandman going any further than the one-shot. However, the issue had surprisingly strong sales on the newsstands and was met with several hundred letters from readers who wanted to see more. The Master of Dreams returned a year later in the first issue of an ongoing series, *Sandman* #2 (1975). However, like almost all other series DC launched during this period, it was destined to have a short run.

The run was scripted by Michael Fleisher, who at the time was writing DC's most grisly series, "The Spectre" in *Adventure Comics* and *Jonah Hex*, but the tone in *Sandman* was something quite different. It was a fairy tale on drugs. The target audience for this series was eight-to-12-year-olds, with a few elements thrown in for older readers.

There was a Golden Age feel to the series (strengthened by quirky Ernie Chua/Mike Royer art on early issues that resembled 1940s Kirby) with a lot of wacky villains. Jed, Brute and Glob were frequently the ones who saved the day as the Sandman was constantly falling into ingenious traps. Brute and Glob were becoming more like Sandman's buddies instead of ultimate weapons, and Jed crossed into the Dream Stream more than once. In issue #3, for example, the boy defeated alien invaders of the Dream Stream with a yo-yo.

With issue #4, Kirby returned to do the pencils, and brought the slick, bulky "god-style" that he had used since the late '60s with him. Unfortunately, much of the charm of the series disappeared when Kirby returned. However, bringing back Kirby made perfect sense since sales on the series were anything but spectacular.

Kirby wasn't enough, however, nor were the story changes Fleisher implemented. In issue #5, Jed's grandfather was killed by a sea monster, and the boy was sent to live with an abusive aunt and uncle. Whether this move was made in an attempt to give the series more realism or to bring it even more in step with a fairy tale (placing Jed at the mercies of an evil step-parent) is hard to tell. At any rate, the Sandman lost his home with issue #6 and slipped into almost total obscurity.

Sandman Revisited

After the cancellation of *Sandman*, the title character only made three more appearances, each without any of the supporting cast.

At first, there was little doubt that the fellow in the Dream Dome wasn't just *a* Sandman, but *the* Sandman. However, when the second Sandman's origin was revealed in *Wonder Woman* #300, it was shown not to be the case after all.

It was once again Roy Thomas, champion of retroactive continuity, who came up with the story—even though this was once instance where the tinkering raised more questions than it answered. The Sandman was Dr. Garret Sanford, a UCLA sleep researcher who had invented a device that allowed him to watch people's dreams like a live TV broadcast. One day, he was summoned to Washington, D.C. to wake the president from a deep, unnatural sleep. With the aid of his dream monitor, he crossed over into the Dream Stream, where he found that he now had super-strength and the ability to fly—and he found the president helpless in the grip of a nightmare monster. Rescuing the commander-in-chief was simple, but Sanford himself was now trapped in the Dream Stream, only able to leave if for one hour out of every 24. To keep himself occupied, Sanford appointed himself guardian of the Dream Stream and began calling himself the Sandman. How he hooked up with Brute and Glob was not detailed.

Essentially, this origin changed the second Sandman from a supernatural being to a human who was trying to cope with being trapped in an alien dimension—forever denied substantial human contact but trying to live a life through the dreams of others.

In *WW* #50, it became clear to him just how lonely he was in the Dream Stream, and brought Wonder Woman back with him. Wonder Woman, who was suffering through the familiar super-hero dilemma of "does-the-one-I-care-for-love-me-or-my-secret-identity?", initially surrendered the real world for the Sandman's carefree

"--'CAUSE WHEN THE MACHINE FINALLY SPITS ME OUT, I AM HIM!
"WHAT I MEAN-- HIS BODY'S BEEN ALTERED TO RECEIVE MY-- WELL, MY SOUL, I GUESS-- AND IT'S NOW IDENTICAL TO MY HEC HALL BOD.
"AT FIRST I FIGURE I'LL GO BONKERS, TOO-- THEN IT SINKS IN. IF I HADN'T WOUND UP IN THE DREAM STREAM, I'D HAVE BEEN NOWHERE--D.O.A.!
"CONSIDERING THE ALTERNATIVE, EVEN GLOB AND BRUTE START LOOKING GOOD TO ME.

Michael Bair's Sandman from *Infinity, Inc.*

dream dimension, but she and Sanford came to the realization that she didn't belong in the Dream Stream. (After all, a property carrying a monthly series and several thousand dollars of merchandising can't be shunted off into some obscure little corner.)

Story-wise there was one major problem with this: Thomas' origin clearly states that a physical trip into the Dream Stream is a one-way affair. However, Wonder Woman wasn't trapped like Sanford was. Obviously, there was more to the Dream Stream than originally had been thought.

This mystery was compounded in *Justice League of America Annual #1* (1983) by Paul Levitz, Len Wein, and Rick Hoberg. JLA foe Dr. Destiny entered the Dream Stream, overpowered the Sandman, and took control of the dimension, pursued by the JLA. At the end of this adventure neither Destiny nor any JLA members had to remain in the Dream Dimension—and Destiny entered the Dream Stream through a dream monitoring device exactly like the one Sanford had devised years before. Something was definitely not right.

As the Sandman and JLA parted ways, the heroes promised to find a cure for his unique condition—which became more unique with each appearance. However, that cure was never to be found because the next time the second Sandman appeared he was dead

A Happy Ending—Almost

In *Infinity Inc.* #49-50 (1987), written by Roy and Dann Thomas and pencilled by Vince Argondezzi, a pregnant Fury was being peeped in her sleep by a mysterious red-and-gold clad figure who threw sleep-inducing sand in the face of anyone who confronted him. Experts in comics trivia instantly recognized the second Sandman, but laymen were probably as mystified as the Infinitors.

After one failed attempt, Nuklon and Fury succeeded in capturing and unmasking the Sandman. To the surprise of trivia experts and Infinitors alike, the man behind the mask wasn't Garrett Sanford but Hector Hall, the father of Fury's child—thought dead

The wrap-up: Neil Gaiman's "Sandman"—the incarnation of Dream—gets everything explained, and then cleans up all the loose ends.

Well?
I am waiting for an explanation
WELL, YOU WERE WAY OUT OF THE PICTURE, LORD. SO WE THOUGHT, HELL, YOU'D OBVIOUSLY BE AWAY FOR A WHILE, PERHAPS FOR A REAL LONG WHILE, SO WE COULD MAYBE MAKE OUR OWN DREAM KING. ONE WE'D BE RUNNING...
WE MID-IN THE KID'S DREAMS, AND WALLED IT OFF FROM THE REST OF THE DREAMING THEN WE BEGAN TO MAKE A SAND-MAN
WE THOUGHT OKAY, NEXT TIME WE GET SOMEONE WHO'S DEAD TO START WITH.
FIRST MORTAL WE USED, GARRETT SANFORD. HE CHOKED UP & KILLED HIMSELF. COULDN'T TAKE THE STRAIN.

after being possessed by an evil entity named Silver Scarab.

Hall explained, in a flashback sequence drawn by Michael Bair, that his soul had been thrust into a dimensional void after Silver Scarab had taken over his body. There, his soul was recovered by Brute and Glob and placed into a machine that "force-fed" him the history and the final fate of Garrett Sanford. The isolation in the Dream Stream had become too much for Sanford, and one day he simply laid down and died. After getting all this information, the machine placed Hall's soul in Sanford's body, which had been altered to look like Hall's original. For reasons of their own, Brute and Glob had created a new Sandman.

Hall wanted them to resume their romance and asked Fury to marry him. She accepted, and together they vanished into the Dream Stream. This could have been a happy ending, but there was still the nagging questions of why the Sandman couldn't leave the Dream Stream when everyone else could dance in and out as they pleased, and why Brute and Glob had cast Hall as a new Sandman.

However, all questions surrounding the second Sandman would eventually be resolved when the *real* Sandman—the very personification of dreams—returned.

The Master of Dreams

When the first issue saw print in early 1989, some suspected the new *Sandman* would be a short-lived, perhaps moderately popular title. Even the series' originator, Neil Gaiman, a British journalist and novelist who also happens to write comics, has said that he hadn't expected *Sandman* to go anywhere. However, the third and current incarnation of Sandman has outstripped everyone's expectations.

What sets this book apart and above those of the same type is the title character. Where the second Sandman had been yet another example of a comic book god who owes more to four-color fictions than any ancient mythologies or faiths, the third Sandman is perhaps the only god in comics who fully fits the role he has been ascribed. One cannot define him as a comic book hero in the traditional sense, as the first two Sandmen were. He functions more as a balancing force within the worlds of the series, sometimes acting as an obvious force of good, other times appearing "good" by comparison with his adversary. Instead of being a pumped-up masked man, the third Sandman is gaunt in appearance.

He is all-powerful within his realm of influence called "The Dreaming," but since an all-powerful character isn't too terribly interesting to read about, a main thread of the series is what happens to a god when he is exposed to humanity. And as the third Sandman series opened, Dream was as close to humanity as he probably would ever want to get.

The Return from Nowhere

In 1916, Roderick Burgess, the aging leader of a mystical cult, devised a plan to keep himself from dying and to give himself power and fame by capturing Death. However, Burgess fouled up and trapped her brother, Dream, instead. Realizing the error, Burgess nonetheless decided to keep Dream in captivity, stripping him of his clothes and weapons—his battle helmet, sleep-inducing sand, and dream-controlling ruby—and kept him isolated from the dreams that powered him. Burgess had hoped to strike a deal with Dream to obtain immortality anyway, but Dream refused to even speak to him.

More than 70 years went by. The absence of Dream was felt around the world as select individuals were trapped either in constant sleep or constant waking. The Golden Age Sandman, Wesley Dodd was subconsciously influenced by the vacuum in the supernatural realm, choosing a gas mask as his disguise in a pale reflection of Dream's battle helmet. Eventually Dream's equipment left the hands of Burgess, who passed away. His son Alex continued to keep Dream in captivity, fearing the entity would want revenge.

Alex, however, was not the warden his father was, and eventually Dream escaped, sentencing Alex to live neverending nightmares.

With his new-found freedom, Dream recovered most of his equipment, but his materiopticon ruby—which had become Dr. Destiny's main weapon—would not be so easily won. It seems that Dr. Destiny's mother was Roderick Burgess' wife, who bequeathed to him Dream's ruby after death. Escaping from Arkham Asylum, he confronted Dream in a showdown in which the ruby was destroyed, Dream regained his power, and, ironically, Dr. Destiny was given his heart's desire: pleasant dreams.

Into the Doll's House

To clear up the last bit of Sandman continuity, Neil Gaiman had Dream discover that some of his subjects were missing from the Dreaming. So, using Brute & Glob in the "The Dolls House" storyline, he connected the second Sandman storyline to the current one. The story centered around Rose, Jed's sister who had been searching for her little brother, who is no longer connected to the Dreaming.

It turns out that 50 years after Dream had been captured by Burgess, Brute and Glob had tried to create their own version of the Dreaming—the Dream Stream—where they would be masters. To this end, they had trapped Garrett Sanford, convinced him that he was stuck in the Dream Dimension for good, and encouraged him to take the role of Sandman so they could have a dream master who was actually *their* servant. Then they engineered the death of Jed's grandfather and the boy's subsequent placement with his abusive aunt and uncle. Their goal was to make Jed's existence so horrible that he would retreat from reality, giving them a secure place to build their realm—the boy's imagination—with plenty of stuff to work with as well.

When Sanford cracked, they had resurrected Hector Hall and continued their construction. The main function of their Sandman was to lead Jed on adventures so he would spend more and more time dreaming. Furthermore, with the now *very* pregnant—and about a year overdue—Fury in the Dream Dome as well, Jed sort of had a set of surrogate parents, which made the dreams even more attractive to him.

When discovered by Dream, Brute and Glob dispatched Hall to defend them, but he was no match for Dream. In an instant Brute and Glob's construction was destroyed, while they, Hall, and Fury were expunged from Jed's mind and into the physical world. Brute and Glob were sent off to a thousand years' torment, Hall was sent to the afterlife (because Dream found it unseemly to let the dead mingle with the living), while Fury he all but ignored. She was no concern of his, but he did warn her that he considered the child she had carried in Dream Stream to be his property, another example of his morals being alien from ours.

In the meantime, Jed's aunt and uncle had been killed by the blast of energy that had brought the Dream Dome's inhabitants out of Jed's mind. The boy had fled while Dream was dealing justice and hitchhiked his way to safety. (However, he traded one ordeal for another, as he thumbed a ride with the Corinthian, another misfit Dream creation on his way to be the guest of honor at a serial killers' convention.)

Finally the story winds up with the reuniting of Rose and Jed and the recapture of all of the missing parts of the Dreaming. In doing so, Neil Gaiman brought full circle the entire Sandman mythos, answering all mysteries.

The only Sandman we'll be seeing in the future is Dream. With Gaiman runing the show, that time-honored name is in very capable hands. ●

MAUS

Hello, there.

This one might seen a bit redundant. After all, the Best Comic Book of the Past Decade has already been analyzed to death in every decent critical journal known to man. But you can't choose comics as the subject matter of a regular column without devoting at least one serious, in-depth installment to this particular one, redundant or not.

You know I'm talking about art spiegelman's shattering Holocaust memoir *Maus* (Pantheon Books, 2 volumes, $18.00 each). I'm not going to be treating it as a sacred icon. It may be a masterwork, but it's a seriously flawed one, and I will be getting into some of the reasons.

Of course, chief among those is the fact that *Maus* cannot help but be inadequate. There is no human way to codify exactly what happened to the Jews of Europe, 1933-1945; drama has failed, literature has failed, biography has failed, history has failed, and even the sheer crunching weight of evidence—much more than anybody could absorb in a dozen lifetimes—has failed. The event is just too damned big to see, let alone understand, even by those who lived it and saw their families swallowed up by it; even they saw only their own small part of it, and even for them the numbers crush the faces of the people who lived and died the reality.

No, unles you're totally ignorant on the subject, you won't understand what happened in Europe fifty years ago any better upon reading *Maus* than you did when you started. Still, discussing art spiegelman's great achievement presents many of the same problems as discussing the Holocaust itself: namely, that it's impossible to say anything fresh and new about it, because so many eloquent, sensitive, and erudite people have spent so much time dissecting it from every possible angle. If anything startlingly original remains to be said on the subject, which I sincerely doubt, then somebody far more original than me is going to have to face the task of saying it.

And yet the same old stuff still has to be said.

I sincerely hope every reader of this column knows what I've been talking about here, but in case some of you don't (a depressing possibility, but one definitely worth addressing) : *Maus* is a critically acclaimed work which has been appearing in serialized form in the spiegelman/Francoise Mouly anthology magazine *RAW*. Only recently completed (and collected in a two-volume hardcover by Pantheon Books), it details the wartime experiences of art's father Vladek, who, along with the rest of Europe's Jews, suddenly found himself surrounded by a world that had decreed him vermin unfit to exist. Through random luck (strongly helped along by his own native resourcefulness), Vladek survived the mass exterminations that followed: six million others, including two million children (his own son Richieu among them), did not.

Vladek's wife Anja also survived, only to commit suicide many decades later. And in his last few years of life, which he spent uneasily remarried to another Holocaust survivor named Mala, the increasingly difficult Vladek dictated his story to his son, who has here adapted it in comic strip form.

The basic story has been told may thousands of times, which is nowhere

Vladek survived the camps by his infinite talent for arranging things.

SO, NOW I WAS A SHOEMAKER. I HAD WHERE A WARM AND PRIVATE ROOM WHERE TO SIT...
HA!! I KNEW YOU WERE AN EXPERT TINMAN, BUT I NEVER KNEW YOU HAD SO MANY OTHER TALENTS!
AND HERE I DIDN'T HAVE ANYMORE TO WORRY WILL YISL GIVE ME OUT.
OFFICIALS LIKED BETTER IF I FIX THEIR SHOES THAN TO SEND TO THE BIG SHOP INSIDE CAMP
THIS IS A NEW BOOT I DON'T WANT YOUR REPAIR TO SHOW.
IT'S A BAD RIP...I'LL DO MY BEST.
IF IT DOESN'T LOOK BRAND NEW BY TOMORROW YOU WON'T BE HERE ANYMORE. UNDERSTAND ME?
I KNEW TO FIX SOLES AND HEELS, BUT WHAT THIS GESTAPO WANTED, IT NEEDED A SPECIALIST.
SO, GOING FROM WORK, I HID THIS BOOT TO SMUGGLE IT TO A REAL SHOEMAKER IN AUSCHWITZ
CAN YOU FIX THIS? I'LL GIVE YOU A DAY'S RATION OF BREAD
FOR A DAY'S RATION OF BREAD I CAN FIX ANYTHING!
I WATCHED CAREFUL HOW HE DID, SO NEXT TIME I CAN SAVE MYSELF SUCH A BREAD

ON OUR APPELL IT WAS ONE OLD GUY THERE, ALWAYS ME WAS COMPLAINING...
I DON'T BELONG HERE WITH ALL THESE YIDS AND POLACKS! I'M A GERMAN LIKE YOU!
I HAVE MEDALS FROM THE KAISER. MY SON IS A GERMAN SOLDIER!
ONLY THEY HIT HIM AND THEY LAUGHED.
WAS HE REALLY A GERMAN?
WHO KNOWS...IT WAS GERMAN PRISONERS ALSO... BUT FOR THE GERMANS THIS GUY WAS JEWISH!

near enough, since by definition, the people who really saw the true face of the Holocaust close up are precisely those who didn't live to tell about it. Witness Anne Frank's last written words, which expressed her firm conviction that human beings are good at heart: it made a nice facile ending for the play, but though we'll never know what she herself would have had to say about it, had she lived, she was reportedly a very different young girl after experiencing the horrors of Auschwitz first hand.

In the end, *Maus* can only be what it's subtitled, "A Survivor's Tale." But the survivor's tale, filtered as it is through the distorting lenses of time and fading memory, is as close as we are now able to get to understanding what happened back then. And *Maus* tells that tale by using a device that is still a matter of serious controversy both in and out of the comics field: namely, it depicts Jews as mice and the Nazis as cats. Other animals show up, here and there: the Americans are dogs, the Swedes are reindeer, and (most problematically) the Poles are Pigs. The book swings back and forth between Vladek's wartime experiences and scenes of spiegelman's own troubled—almost dysfunctional—modern-day relationship with the man, who, as portrayed here, was miserly, selfish, difficult, and not even remotely the saintly holocaust survivor found in more facile works.

Now, presenting the Holocaust as a great macrocosmic game of predator and prey is an audacious idea, but it only works part of the time. (One gets the idea that spiegelman himself wasn't a hundred percent happy with it). It works because, to the Nazis, Jews *weren't* human: they were disease-carrying vermin, who had to be hunted down and destroyed. The device also benefits from its inherent artificiality; since we're looking at history, not funny-animal fantasy, we as readers are forced to project ourselves past the simple line-drawing faces into the realization that these were real horrors perpetrated on real people.

Unfortunately, the metaphor breaks down on other levels. The Nazis and Jews did not have a predator/prey relationship: predators just do what they must to survive, and the Nazis acted out of bigotry and malice. No natural predators outnumber their prey, but it was precisely that statistic which gave the Holocaust its unstoppable momentum. Predators also tend to pick out the weak and the old—and though those were also the first targets in Nazi Europe, the arbitrary nature of the camps rendered factors like strength of will and quality of courage almost irrelevant. (To his credit, spiegelman recognizes this: he even reports the time his therapist, himself a concentration camp survivor, told him, "Life always takes the side of life, and somehow the victims are blamed. But it wasn't the *best* people who survived, nor did the best ones die. It was *random*.")

But these are all minor complaints. The greatest flaw in spiegelman's metaphor is simply that it flies against the single greatest horror of all genocides, from Armenians massacred by the Turks to the Kurd villages gassed by Saddam Hussein—namely, that the murderers and the victims belong to the same species. Separating them into categories might evoke a sense of what it felt like for them, but it also plays into the hands of the murderers themselves.

Above & below: problematic animal stereotypes: cats, mice, frogs, dogs. . .and pigs.

SHOULD I BE HAPPY? AM I AT A CARNIVAL?
LET ME SEE YOUR ARM..
HE WAS A PRIEST..
HMM. YOUR NUMBER STARTS WITH 17. IN HEBREW THAT'S "K'MINYAN TOV." SEVENTEEN IS A VERY GOOD OMEN...
HE WASN'T JEWISH - BUT VERY INTELLIGENT!

DIEU MERCI! I TALK ENGLISH ALSO A LITTLE. I WAS BECOMING CRAZY!...
THERE IS NO OTHER FRENCH HERE AND I DO NOT KNOW TO TALK GERMAN. I HAD NOBODY TO WHO TO TALK.
YOU ARE A POLE-JEW, YES? HOW YOU KNOW ENGLISH?
ACCH... I DREAMED ALWAYS TO GO ONE DAY TO AMERICA.
SO, WE TALKED, AND IT MADE THE TIME LIGHTER.

THIS HOUSE WILL BE PART OF OUR BASE CAMP...
BUT I GUESS YOU BOYS CAN STAY IF YOU KEEP THE JOINT CLEAN AND MAKE OUR BEDS.
WANT SOME CHOCOLATE?
M-MAYBE FOR LATER. THANK YOU.

Then there's the business of portraying the Poles as pigs. Quite a few people (including a certain irascible writer-creator I've kidded somewhat excessively in these pages) have complained about this at great length, pointing out that the Poles were also victims of the Nazis. And while the captive Poles cooperated with the rounding up of Jews to an extent unequalled by any other occupied country, there were also a small but substantial number of Poles who resisted, and protected fugitive Jews at no small risk to themselves. spiegelman has said that this was not entirely his intent, but whatever his intent was, depicting all poles as pigs—a barnyard animal unfairly stereotyped as fat, greedy, lazy and stupid—turns the entire nation into a vast undifferentiated mass, which is precisely the same logic that makes bigotry, and by extention genocide, so horribly easy.

As a Jew, I find it too easy to sympathize. . .especially since today's Poland is even now once again wracked by a virulent official antisemitism that blames all of that nation's problems on a miniscule Jewish minority increasingly composed of the very, very old. No. I have no love lost for Poland. But Poles as individual people are of course an entirely different matter. And I find spiegelman's assertion that he was unaware of the implication wholly ingenuous—especialy since at one point he depicts a French prisoner as a frog.

So the metaphor fails. spiegelman cannot be entirely faulted for this; as we've already said, the Holocaust defies all simple explanations. But the book succeeds as art, spectacularly, and one of the reasons it does is that he gives his own present-day relationship with his father equal time with the horrors his father experienced in the past.

It's a seriously troubled relationship, in large part because Vladek is such a troublesome man—the most fascinating, enigmatic character comics have seen in the past decade. Vladek obviously loves his son, but he's also an irritating, demanding, miserly, and (it turns out) bigoted man whose loveless second marriage seems to consist of constantly berating his desperately unhappy wife for trying to steal his money. At one point in volume one, art himself says that in some ways Vladek is a bigot's picture of the perfectly stereotyped Jew, and wonders aloud if that's one of the aftereffects of Auschwitz; it would be comforting to think so, but he's told that Vladek was always like that, even before the war.

BETTER YOU SHOULDN'T SMOKE: FOR YOU IT'S TERRIBLE, AND FOR ME, WITH MY SHORTNESS OF BREATH, IT'S ALSO NO GOOD TO BE NEAR..
BUT IF ANYWAY YOU'RE SMOKING, PLEASE DON'T USE FROM ME MY WOODEN MATCHES. I DON'T HAVE LEFT SO MANY, AND ALREADY TO MAKE COFFEE YOU USED ONE.
ONLY TO LIGHT THE OVEN I USE THEM. THESE WOOD MATCHES I HAVE TO BUY! THE PAPER MATCHES I CAN HAVE FREE FROM THE LOBBY OF THE PINES HOTEL
JEEZ! I'LL BUY YOU A WHOLE BOX OF WOODEN MATCHES!
IT ISN'T NECESSARY. AT HOME OUR OVEN IS AUTOMATIC, AND HERE I'M STAYING ONLY 15 MORE DAYS.
AND I HAVE STILL 50 MATCHES LEFT. HOW MANY MATCHES CAN I USE?..
WHAT A MISER! I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE. I'M GOING OUT FOR AIR!
ALWAYS ARTIE IS NERVOUS- SO LIKE HIS MOTHER - SHE ALSO WAS NERVOUS
BAH
PSST.

Vladek: a stereotype of Jewish penny-pinching. . .

Throughout both volumes, it's clear that the younger spiegelman—who, though fascinated by his father, still struggles to keep him at an emotional arm's length—is trying to comprehend not one, but two enigmas: the historical one, and the one embodied in the person of his father. The latter enigma is not an unusual one. All fathers are enigmas to their sons, just like all mothers are enigmas to their daughters. But this particular enigma had the added weight of the Holocaust on top of it, rendering it a hundred times more difficult, because it's impossible to separate the Holocaust from the man. As readers we find ourselves asking the same questions that spiegelman struggles with for two volumes: who is Vladek, really? Is he somebody twisted by experiences that no human being should ever have to endure? Or is he essentially the same person he would have been anyway, only with more legitimate reasons for his excesses? Is there any way to know?

. . .and a racist; not at all a saint-like survivor.

THAT'S OUTRAGEOUS! HOW CAN YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, BE SUCH A RACIST! YOU TALK ABOUT BLACKS THE WAY THE NAZIS TALKED ABOUT THE JEWS!
ACH!...
I THOUGHT REALLY YOU ARE MORE SMART THAN THIS, FRANÇOISE...
IT'S NOT EVEN TO COMPARE. THE SWVARTSERS AND THE JEWS!

The answer *might* be that the qualities that made Vladek Spiegelman so hard to deal with in the present day are the *very same ones* that helped him survive the nightmare of Auschwitz. One of the best writers on the subject of the Holocaust was a man named Primo Levi, and his wrenching, brilliant work *The Drowned and the Saved*, arguably one of the five best books ever written on this difficult subject, actually devoted an entire chapter to that very idea. Levi was of the opinion that, though random fate was definitely by far the most important factor in deciding who lived and who died, the *next* most important factor was (for lack of a better word) a certain quality of ruthlessness. Echoing spiegelman's therapist, Levi wrote that the best did not live. The ones who lived, according to him, were the scroungers, the deal-makers; the ones emotionally prepared to steal, and compromise themselves, and even charm their would-be murderers, all for the sake of the extra crust of bread that might keep them alive another day.

Vladek belonged to that group. There's a remarkable sequence in Book Two where he recounts his experiences aboard a cattle car to Dachau. These trains were packed solid with prisoners already weakened by hunger and disease. The prisoners were denied food or water for the duration of the trip, and pressed so tightly together that there was no room to move or even sit. Many died of simple suffocation. Vladek survived. How? Well, first he strung a blanket from two hooks in the ceiling, just so he could sit above the crowd and therefore save his strength; then he staved off thirst by reaching his hand through a barred window and gathering ice from the roof of the train; then he traded the ice for small quantities of sugar being hoarded by thirsty fellow prisoners.

It's possible, I suppose, for readers using the ethical standards of everyday life to criticize Vladek for not sharing his homemade hammock with others, or for bartering the ice other prisoners needed to survive. But that would be beside the point. As Levi points out, the Holocaust was a time way outside the reach of everyday morality. What mattered was maximizing every possible advantage, and Vladek excelled at that, in the face of inconceivable indignities. The least of those, which took place as the War was winding down, is recounted near the end of Volume Two, when the fugitive Vladek was rescued by American soldiers who offer him shelter only in exchange for his services as a valet. He shined their shoes and let them call him Willie, and thirty-five years later, he actually remembered them with something resembling fondness.

In the end, the fact that the same qualities which got Vladek through the war also made him an extremely difficult man, capable of causing great pain (and on occasion, mortifying embarrassment) to his family, is just plain irrelevant. What's relevant is the final roll call, in his story's penultimate chapter, of all the friends and relatives who didn't make it: people with names like Hela and Josef and Levek and Tosha and Richieu. In a shattering sequence, Vladek calls out their names while looking at old snapshots, eulogizing each one with a wholly inadequate sentence or two. He even remembers people so completely expunged that even their photos didn't survive the war. And then, growing weak, he tells his son (who hasn't put up the storm windows as promised), "Never mind, darling. Always it's a pleasure when you visit."

Vladek's eccentricities are irrelevant because he survived. He started again. He had a son who grew up to pass along his story—a son who, throughout both volumes of *Maus*, is brutally honest in painting himself as not the most devoted of offspring. They're irrelevant because of a simple panel near the end of Volume Two, where spiegelman reproduces an old snapshot of his father wearing a concentration camp uniform.

That panel may be the single most powerful moment in either volume... because in that moment Vladek looks out at us across the span of decades, to remind us that he wasn't a bunch of lines on a piece of paper. He wasn't a comic book character, or a cartoon mouse. Despite everything he was, everything that happened to him, everything the world did to him and tried to do to him, Vladek Spiegelman was a man.

Surviving the holocaust by looking out for #1.

I PUSHED TO A CORNER. NOT TO GET CRUSHED...
HIGH UP I SAW A FEW HOOKS TO CHAIN UP MAYBE THE ANIMALS.
I HAD STILL THE THIN BLANKET THEY GAVE ME.
I CLIMBED TO SOME-BODY'S SHOULDER AND HOOKED IT STRONG.
IN THIS WAY I CAN REST AND BREATHE A LITTLE.
THIS SAVED ME. MAY-BE 35 PEOPLE CAME OUT FROM THIS CAR OF 200.

A Quickie Recommendation Totally Unrelated to Comics

The motion picture *City of Hope*, written and directed by John Sayles. The saga of the events surrounding a racial incident in a crumbling American city, it juggled almost thirty characters with such technical wizardry, and such a deeply compassionate understanding of where our country is and where it might be going, that it could almost be called miraculous. Even though its half-life in theatres was obscenely brief—the product of a movie-going public now almost totally disinterested in anything more intellectually challenging than the latest John Hughes movie—it was definitely a serious contender of the best movie of the year. It might even be out on video by now. Please. Forego the latest trendy graphic novel and rent it. Now.

Well, that's about all we have room for this time out. As always, this column welcomes comments and criticism at P.O. Box 461, Hartsdale, NY 10530-0461. I do not promise (or rule out) personal replies, but I will try to respond to most intelligible correspondence in the pages of a future installment. As always, letters about anything else in the magazine, or letters specifically intended for publication, should be sent to "Amazing Readers".

This installment was by necessity a mite grimmer than our usual, but things are about to swing back in the other direction. Two months from now, we'll see the Second Annual Silver Gallstone Awards, covering much of the great and even more of the appalling of the Year In Comics, 1991. And *Next Month*, as part of this magazine's gala 200th All-Comics Issue, we'll have a special installment produced in collaboration with cartoonist Chas Gillen! It's called "Tales From the Gall!" See you then... and Notary Sojak! ●

ANDY MANGELS BACK STAGE

SHOOTING FISH IN A BARREL

This column is coming to you from my new Apple Mac Classic 2/40 and LaserWriter LS. While that might not mean anything to you as you read this, it does make a difference in the look of my column to me and my editors (who are used to my Mac 512k and ImageWriter).

Anyhow, the New Year is upon us, and as usual, Hollywood's serving up a load of projects.

Networks: ABC

Contrary to earlier reports, a surly ABC scheduling executive informed me that no premiere date has been set for George Lucas' *Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*. Announced for a Feburary premiere, on Monday nights, the series "many be seen in late Feburary or early March. We haven't commited to anything yet."

CBS

Fish Police, a Hanna-Barbera project, will have six episodes aired, not seven. It is likely to appear in April or May, on prime-time. Animated with about 22,000 cels per half-hour, the show will be smoother than most animated shows which usually have around 15,000 cels. The characters and settings are an odd almalgamation of Steve Moncuse's comic series and cop show cliches.

Inspector Gill (voiced by John Ritter) is a dapper carp cop with a living starfish badge named Sandy, and an ever-present deep-sea trenchcoat and fedora. Pearl (Megan Mullally) is Gill's gal, the owner and waitress of Pearl's Diner. Angel (JoBeth Williams) is a torch singer at the Shell Shack nightclub. She dresses like Jessica Rabbit, hangs out with both Gill and Calamari, and has a heart of gold.

Chief Abalone (Ed Asner) is Gill's boss, a man who's older than his desk, has been smoking stogies since he was 12, and who has two moods—mad and really mad. Goldie (Tony-award winning Georgia Brown), the plain secretary of Chief Abalone, has been a grouch for 25 years. Tad (Charlie Schlatter) is Pearl's brother and a Fish Police go-fer.

Calimari (Hector Elizondo) is the main bad guy, the Codfather of Fish City. Gill won't rest until he sees Calamari fry. Calimari's aided by Sharkster (Tim Curry), his lawyer, and Mussels Marinara (Frank Welker), his bodyguard.

Other *Fish Police* regulars include Catfish (Robert Guillaume), a "master of disguise" who looks like Moncuse's well-known design for the comic's Inspector Gill, and Crabby (Buddy Hackett), a loudly-opinionated crab cab-driver. Jonathan Winters guest-stars in one episode as Mayor Cod, and in another as a reporter.

NBC

Man & Machine is a Universal one-hour series now looking likely for Fall 1992 airing instead of mid-season (it was replaced by producer Dick Wolf's second new series, *Crime & Punishment*). "It's an unusual show" said an NBC source. "It's about a policeman who is partnered with an experimental female cyborg. With a lot of action, it's also a relationship/detective show." Casting is underway.

Wes Craven's much-anticipated *Nightmare Cafe* still has no definite start-date as a mid-season replacement. The one-hour show stars Robert Englund.

FOX

Toxic Crusaders, the toy line, has been cancelled, due to extreme drop-off of sales. The animated show is not expected to return this Fall.

Fox is negotiationg to pick up NBC's *Wishkid*, the animated adventures of Macaulay Culkin. The series has been dropped for next year, along with all of NBC's Saturday morning schedule. Oddly enough, *Wishkid* was originally developed for Fox, but ended up on NBC.

Bobby's World, the Howie Mandel-voiced series, may be expanded to a daily series. Weekday viewing would begin this Fall if negotiations with Film Roman go well.

Fox is gung-ho on animation for

Fish Police: Angel, a torch singer at the Shell Shack nightclub.

daily airings. This fall will see the afternoon block of *Tiny Toon Adventures*, *Beetlejuice*, *Tom and Jerry Kids* and the long-awaited *Batman* series. This in addition to the re-run *Merrie Melodies* and *Peter Pan & The Pirates* (which may be replaced by *Bobby's World*) in the mornings, make Fox the place to be for toon times.

Finally, Fox is still interested in developing *The X-Men* as an animated series. Fox President Margaret Loesch loves the series, and is the ex-President of Marvel Productions, which would provide the animation.

Syndication & Cable

Superboy is heading towards the wrap-up of its fourth and final season in May. All March episodes will be re-runs, including "Know Thine Enemy Pt I & II" (March 7 & 14), "Hell Breaks Loose" (March 21), "Into the Mystery" (March 28), and "To Be Human Pt I & II" (April 4 & 11).

Erin Gray guest-stars in "Cat and Mouse" (April 18), an episode written by star Gerard Christopher. She plays a psychiatrist who gives Clark a lie-detector test in which he may be forced to reveal his secret identity! And the much ballyhooed "Obituary for a Super-Hero" (April 25), finds Superboy allowing the public to think he's been killed in order to catch a well-known villain on a murder charge. Both shows will make extensive use of scenes from earlier episodes; these are known as "clip shows". Three more episodes round out the series in May.

SuperForce has more time on its hands after a series of re-runs including: "Light Around The Body" (April 4), and "Illegal Alien" (April 11). Zach is the target of an overzealous D.A. in "The Luddite Crusade" (April 18), a "clip-show" featuring none other than Timothy Leary as the Police Commissioner! Then, Super Force witnesses "A Rainbow at Midnight" (April 25), as he helps a ghost set right the murder of two cops twenty years ago!

Feature Films

The newest and biggest comic news would *seem* to be an announcement of a multi-country film/comic project newly developed by The Film Company, AmeriComics and Russian investors. Beginning March 25th in St. Petersburg, Russia, director John Buechler will film *Dawn Hunter*. Now here's where it gets tricky. "*Dawn Hunter*...will be the first of the characters brought to publication as a comic book by Editor Bill Black under the new joint venture (between The Film Co. and AC)." Catch the catch? This is *not* a comic book character making it to screen, but a comic book adaptation of a film

Fish Police: Chief Abalone and his secretary Goldie.

character. It's nothing more than a standard licensing deal on a low-budget ($11 million) T&A thriller which will problably go direct-to-video!

However, the news that Frankovich and his Film Company will be supposedly producing *Femforce—The Movie*, is interesting news. Bill Black and Frankovich will co-write and produce the film, with *Dawn Hunter* star Lois Hamilton co-producing. Sounds like a cozy relationship here to me. Perhaps the best part of the news is a portion of the press release which states (punctuation and capitalization theirs): AC COMICS and THE FILM COMPANY will launch a Nationwide search for Beautiful Actresses who can portray the *Femforce* superheroines on screen with loyal *Femforce* readers participating in the choices via a competition in the comics themselves."

Wellllllll. To say the idea of comic readers polling actresses based on looks rather than talent is not so far-fetched (did someone mention 900 lines?) Perhaps though, given *Femforce's*—shall we say "top-heavy" or "prurient"?—heroines, the potential for several porn starlets with names like Bambi and Muffy and Tasha (Wait a second. Aren't those the real *Femforce's* names?) to utilize the casting couch as an audition prop seems mind-boggling. We'll keep you up dated as to where these boobs go next. May I suggest a cameo appearance by Clarence "No Opinon" Thomas?

No news on who's now scripting *The Watchmen* for Largo Entertainment, now that Bilson & DeMeo have dropped out.

Bill Bixby's stated desire to do a new *Hulk* movie may be squelched as the rights are reportedly up for negotiation. His co-star, Lou Ferrigno, has also gone back into the world of professional body-building, and has said he won't be doing any movie or TV work for at least a year!

Godzilla vs. King Gidrah, the 17th *Godzilla* movie from Toho Studios, will unleash its savage fury on both Americans and American audiences this summer. In the film, Americans from the 23rd Century return to 1992 in a time machine. Their mission is to stop Japan from becoming a world super-power in the future. They unleash King Gidrah to destroy Japan, and it will be up to Godzilla to stop its deadly rampage! In one scene, Godzilla smashes a group of American soldiers with his foot, then is saluted by a squad of Japanese soldiers. Toho spokesman Hidekichi Yamane says that "Of course, I realize it may be unpleasant for Americans to watch that, but I think it's not as bad as those Hollywood war movies that portray Japanese soldiers with buck teeth." Seems to me Toho may not quite grasp

Again, *Fish Police:* Catfish, Inspector Gill, Pearl, and Crabby.

the concept "Two wrongs don't make a right."

Wondering why you didn't see much footage or photos of *Hook* in anything other than big-budget magazines or TV Shows? It's because Tri-Star refused to release press kits to smaller magazines and newspapers, including *Amazing Heroes*. "We sent out about a third less press kits than normal," one spokeswoman explained. This after (supposedly) no photos were available until two days after the film opened, and then only to selected press (*Starlog* had no problem getting them). Not satisfied with giving the print press a slap in the face, Tri-Star also withheld Electronic Press Kits (EPKs) from local television stations. The EPK footage (much of it behind-the-scenes material) is used with stories and reviews of the film. Forty days of EPK footage was shot (as opposed to the usual six), but Tri-Star held it back to put in a one-hour network *Making of Hook* special. This left anybody smaller than *Entertainment Tonight* and *Siskel & Ebert* with no *Hook* footage to show. Lets all give Tri-Star one loud pirate raspberry for their poor treatment of the press and electronic media. Ptthhhhhhhhhht!

That's not the only *Hook* dirt surfacing, however. The infamous hook that Dustin Hoffman wears, seen not only in the film but in posters and advertisements everywhere, was designed and created by Alex Collins (knife-maker) and Tony Swatton (blacksmith) who, despite their excellent work, were not given screen credit, even though they also created several daggers for Tinkerbell and Captain Hook, as well as attachments for the fatal claw (which were cut from the film).

Universal is preparing an animated musical film about dinosaurs, called *We're Back*. Expect a brontosaurus or two in your neighborhood soon.

No news on the potential collapse of Carolco. The company, which is developing *Spider-Man* (to be written and directed by James Cameron) and the *X-Men* (see below) is experiencing severe money problems. More news as it comes in.

Carolco's potential collapse puts another comic book property, *Mai, the Psychic Girl*, in jeopardy. To be directed by Tim Burton, the film has been scripted by Larry Wilson and Caroline Thompson (*Addams Family, Edward Scissorhands*). As reported in past columns, the film will be a musical, with music and songs by synth-pop group Sparks. Also, in the film, Mai will be an American girl, not Japanese.

The duo are now working with Paul Chadwick on the script for *Concrete* (which Wilson may direct), and the script for *MidKnight*, a Columbia film which will star Michael Jackson as a star-spanning super-hero! Anton Furst was to desing the film; no replacement has been named after his recent suicide.

Believe it or not, *The Rocketeer* bumped *Terminator 2* out of the #1 spot its first week in Tokyo (ending Dec. 13th)! Whether or not the film will retain its new-found wings is up in the air as I write this. The pic has bombed badly in every other country it's opened in.

For the several people who've written wondering what ex-*Superboy* John Haymes Newton is up to these days, there's hope. In November, he started filming *Desert Hawk*, top-lining the 21st Century Film directed by Isaac Florentine. No news on the plot. It's interesting that the-man-who-was-Superboy has first been hired by the-man-who-co-produced-*Superman IV*-Menahem Golan. Maybe all these guys who hate Alexander and Ilya Salkind have a club going or something.

20th Century Fox is wooing Andrew Lloyd Webber to create an animated *Dr. Seuss* musical film. They would co-produce with Lightmotive, who own the film rights to all of Seuss' material. Fox is also planning on distributing *Once Upon a Forest*, another animated musical from David Kirschner and Hanna-Barbera.

Batman Returns

The posters are up in some theaters for *Batman Returns*. The image is a black silhouette of the familiar logo's bat-symbol on a white marblized background. It says only "Returns, July 19." This may change, of course, if it's scheduled against a bigger film (such as *Star Trek VI* moving its date to avoid conflict with *Hook*). So far the only potential rivals seem to be the competing *Christopher Columbus* movies.

Newest bit of film info finds a scene filmed recently with the new "Bat-Bullet." What's this? In a scene where Batman is chasing down a crook in the Batmobile, they go into an alley too small for the car; the middle section of the Batmobile breaks away into a sleek, thin, bullet-shaped vehicle. Thus, the "Bat-Bullet," and the chase ensues.

Video Releases

Jim Henson Productions and Walt Disney Company finally made a deal in December regarding video rights to the various Muppet properties. The videos will be released by Buena Vista Home Video under the Jim Henson Home Video label. The first releases seem likely for Fall. Disney now owns the rights to *The Muppet Show, Muppet Babies, Dark Crystal*, and all the Muppet films.

Theater

Dennis, The Musical, premiered on January 11th at the Folly Theatre in Kansas City. Based on Hank Ketcham's famous *Dennis the Menace* comic strip. This is the latest in comics-to-stage musical adaptations. Ketcham collaborated on the story with Ernest Chambers, while Chambers, Richard Enquist, and Doug Katsaros did the songs and music. The story focuses more on Dennis's neighbors, the Wilsons, as a sneaky real estate agent tries to talk them into selling their house and moving to a retirement community. Dennis, of course, drives the agents away and saves his beleagured neighbors. Receiveing good reviews, it is rumored the show may be headed for a Broadway production, a la *Annie*.

Book Releases

Of interest to "Backstage" readers:

Pioneer has released a $14.95 softcover book called *Video SuperHeroes*, written by James Van Hise (aided by several others). The book purports to be the "complete story of the many costumed superheroes on TV. . . plus a complete episode guide to *The Flash*." My sincere advice is not to waste your money on this book.

Pioneer has always had poor production values and seems only marginally concerned with authenticity. While James Van Hise is a nice guy, this book's cursory and ofttimes flat-out incorrect and poorly researched material is an embarrassment. it's books like this that give "legitimate" TV history books (if that's not an oxymoron) a crappy name.

About the *Batman* TV show: "It was this weird city where everybody acted so exaggerated. It was something very absurdist. But it worked. The Siren was a good show. Stanley Ralph Ross wrote that. The Zsa Zsa Gabor episode, which was the last episode, was interesting." Ah, such perfect grammar in a fluent fifth-grade writing style.

Facts are correct maybe two-thirds of the time in the book, such as when a *Flash* character is "played with quite a bit of engaging charm by Megan Lockhart." The *character's* name is Megan, but she's played by Joyce Hyser, as revealed in a piss-poor *Flash* episode guide which doesn't list the show titles (revealed in past "Backstage" columns and the DC *Flash TV Special*). Facts are mainly incorrect in the "Cartoon Super-Heroes" section. Here, van Hise retreads other reference books (also incorrect, and he really should give them a credit if he's going to "appropriate" so much information.)

The Incredible Hulk cartoon series is completely missing, as is *Spider-Man and his Amazing Friends* (though the little known 1981 syndicated *Spider-Man* series is given half a sentence). Several shows list the amount of epidodes, almost all of which are wrong. In the *Super-Friends* section, Zan, Jayna, and Gleek (teen side-kicks for eight years) are given no mention, while Wendy, Marvin, and Wonder Dog (sidekicks for one year) are. Page 110 continues its discussion somewhere, but certainly not on 111 or 112. *Legends of the Super-Heroes* is called "Challenge of the Super-Heroes," and no mention is made of the second episode (both extensively covered in *AH*#187). I could go on, but you get the point.

Video Super-Heroes is definitely a must-avoid book on your buying list. Next month, I'll tell you whether *Comic Book Heroes of the Screen*, a new hardcover, is worth its rather steep price tag.

Script Reviews

Plastic Man

Second Draft—2/16/89—Written by Charles Gale

Yet another Steven Spielberg project, this one's intended for Amblin Entertainment. While I'm not sure of the progress on the film, and this is an older draft, I understand Gale's work is still being used on a third draft.

It's 1941, and small-time crook Neil "Eel" O'Brien works as a mechanic at a chop shop and mob repair shop. When he, his boss, Ace, and fellow mechanic/crook, Tonto, are hired to steal some secret papers from a pharmacist's lab, Eel accidentaly causes chemical explosion. Ace and Tonto help Eel away after snatching the papers.

Eel's already got problems. His torch-singer girlfriend, Cookie Williams, has left him for the rich and charming mystery-man, Peter Roepell. Unknown to either Eel or Cookie, Roepell is really Herr Roepell, a master Nazi spy, and the one who wanted the secret papers.

Developing a funny elasticity, Eel finally returns to the pharmacy to seek the help of the man whom he robbed. Ogilvie, an escaped German scientist, agrees to help cure him if he finds out who has the papers and recovers them. Eel, who realy does have a basic streak of decency agrees. Ogilvie tells him to keep the goggles and the red long johns he was wearing in the explosion, as both have developed rubbery qualities as well.

Ogilvie and Eel are soon working with the Froelichs, a pair of escaped German scientists working on atomic research to help the war efforts. Roepell vows to stop them before they can give away the secrets to the atomic bomb, and kidnaps them, but not before Eel becomes an overnight celebrity by saving a child's life and stopping Ace's robbery of the Froelich lab. Now Roepell wants to capture Plastic Man to learn his secrets for the Third Reich.

While Roepell's henchmen capture Plastic Man and Ogilvie, the Nazi himself is preparing to leave for Germany with the Froelichs and Cookie in tow. When Plastic Man escapes, will he use the antidote to cure himself, or will he use his powers to save the scientists? (He doesn't know Cookie is involved.) All the questions are answered in an incredible (and incredulous) fight above the ground in a pilot-less airplane. About the ending, let's just say that the script leaves room for a sequel.

*Plastic Man*was a really*fun* read, fast-moving and energetic. The dialogue wes truly cracking in some places. A few relly good lines include: Mrs. Roffery, Eel's landlord talking about his mother, "She was like a sister to me...Well, maybe not a sistermy sister's a drunken slut—but she was like a *cousin* to me." A radio program promises the "real life drama of Helen Trenty," who proves that "because a woman is 35 or more, romance in life need not be over." And believe it or not, there's even a silly girl-talk discussion of Plastic Man's sex organs, using bubble gum for creative illustration!

While the plastic sequences are as imaginative as any Cole story, I did have a problem imagining how these would look in three-dimensions on a screen. Comics' one-dimensionality allows for stretchable characters; despite the success of the form in *Terminator 2* and *The Abyss* , I'm still unsure that Plas could be done effectively without inspiring unintentional giggles.

However, (you knew there was a "however," didn't you?) *Plastic Man* has basically one *major* drawback in this form. If you read over the synopsis, you'll find a lot of similarities to the plot of one recent super-hero movie bomb, *The Rocketeer* . Both are period pieces with reluctant heroes and singer girlfriends taken in by undercover Nazi spies who want secret plans. Both feature spectacular finishes on airborne objects. The similarities are probably not intentional, but are instead due to the restraints of creating an origin for a 1940's hero that works cinematically. This resemblance to *The Rocketeer* , more than anything, could be the death knell for this version of *Plastic Man* . If the film is made, I imagine drastic revisions.

On the other hand, if Paul (Pee-Wee Herman) Reubens were to take the role (as rumored), perhaps this *Plastic Man* would be springy enough to with stand the drawbacks inherent in filming this long-time hero. Hey, and music videos of the theme song would be great... follow the bouncing...ball?

Batman II

First Draft—1990—Written by Sam Hamm

Please note that this is *not* the script for *Batman Returns*, currently being filmed by Tim Burton; that film is from later versions of a similar-but-different story by Dan Waters and Wesley Strick. Hamm never went to a second draft of the script, as Tim Burton didn't like his handling of the characters this time around. As you'll see, this may strike one as odd, given the concessions Hamm makes in the story to the Burton/Keaton Batman mythos.

It's sixteen days before Christmas in Gotham, and the most popular gift items are Batman merchandise. A red-beret-wearing troop of teens (led by Mike Sekowsky) calls itself the "Order of the Bat" as they patrol the streets. Batman is working more closely with the police, as evidenced in an exciting (if implausable) opening chase scene against five snowmobile-riding jewelry thieves. Pulling every trick possible out of the Batmobile (flame-throwers, heat-seeking missiles, grappling hooks, winches, fragmentation grenades, nets), Batman captures the crooks and delivers them, gift-wrapped to the police.

Then, while Bruce resumes his relationship with Vicki Vale, Mr. Boniface (what happened to Oswald Cobblepot?), a fastidously fussy bird-trainer is released after 13 years in prison. He's rich, even after returning the $42 million he stole 13 years ago. (The money wasn't buried, it was in banks, acruing interest!) That night, out on the town, Bruce and Vicki hear about a mysterious street kid who helped save a woman from muggers, when the Order of the Bat protectors ran away. Who is the mysterious youth?

A third character is introduced into the mix when the exotic-but-deadly Selina Kyle visits a wharf and robs a drug-and-art smuggling operation as the Catwoman, killing dozens of men with her whip and razor-sharp talons. She steals an art piece for the Penguin: a stone raven. But what's worse is that she's framed Batman for the murderous carnage she left behind!

Batman suddenly finds himself at odds with the police in a city which, days before, idolized him. He brushes up with Catwoman after she's killed a prominent businessman (another of Gotham's "Five Family" men, of which Wayne is a part) and stolen a second stone raven, again implicating the Dark Knight. Meanwhile, Vicki is saved by the strange acrobatic street kid, who identifies himself as Dick before bounding off to a hideout.

Bruce finds himself more intrigued by Catwoman, and by Selina Kyle, the new curator at the Flugelheim Museum. Still, he's worried that the other two surviving "Five Family" members have been threatened by "Batman." Several nights later, Catwoman lures Batman to the scene of a third murder, defeats him, and toys with him before dropping him twelve stories to the street and the waiting police. Only quick thinking and several bat-gimmicks save his life. He escapes with the help of the mysterious street-youth, who discovers his identity even as Bruce finds an odd red-and-green costume among the kid's belongings.

Confronting the only other survivor, Triptree, Bruce finds out that the "Five Families" each had a stone raven, which, when put together led to a huge treasure stolen by their ancestors. Because Bruce's father wouldn't go along with hiding this wrong-doing, the others had him killed! Now it's become personal.

When Triptree meets with the Penguin and Catwoman in the subway tunnels to give them the final two birds, he's killed. But the pair are thwarted when Dick steals the birds and Batman arrives and battles Catwoman. Our heroes are defeated, and Bruce takes Dick back to Wayne Manor to tend to his wounds, not knowing that Catwoman and Penguin have discovered that the Gotham treasure is in a cave below that very Manor!

The script climaxes in a dizzying fight-to-the-finish in Wayne Manor and the Batcave, during which the Catwoman is crippled, Alfred is shot, Batman and Vicki hang once again off a precipice, and the Penguin discovers Batman's identity before falling to his death, engulfed in a cloud of bats. In the aftermath, on Christmas eve, Bruce's present to Vicki is a diamond engagement ring, as Dick looks on warily and Alfred tosses broken furniture in to the roaring fire by a shattered Christmas tree. What a family portrait.

What's perhaps most interesting about *Batman II* are the elements that were originally in the first film, written out and changed by screen time. There is a scene of Batman charging on horseback (a la *Dark Knight*), similar scenes with Dick, and an ending in which the villain is attacked by bats before his death. There are several scenes as well in major landmarks we saw in the first film: the Flugelheim, Wayne's hall of armor, etc. On the former, it's probably Hamm's liking for the scenes, which were cut from the first. On the latter, it's probable that Hamm was told to utilize already built sets from England.

Batman II reads more like a comic book than the original design for the first film did; Batman has enough batgadgets that he seems to have conspired with his '60s counterpart. The Penguin is very underutilized, making it clear that Catwoman is the real focus villain of the script. Much of her dialogue has sexual overtones, though her flippant remarks when slashing people seem too inspired by Freddy Krueger.

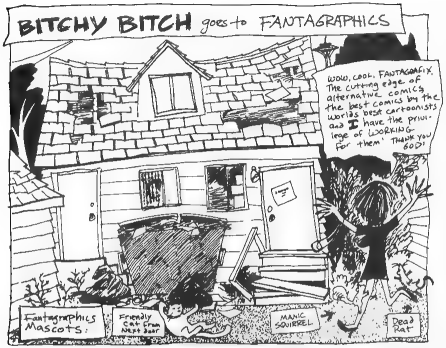
None of the characters in the film are heavily developed, though Catwoman comes out about the best. Bruce's dialogue portrays more for the Keaton distractedness than we saw in the original film, a plus in my book. It's interesting that Hamm felt he had to tie in the Waynes' murder to this film as well, though it seemed rather contrived. Also interesting is the "Order of the Bat," predating the *Legends of the Dark Knight* story DC just did by quite a while. I did wonder what the "Order" meant to the script, as they're also very under-utilized; they disappear as conveniently as the Batmobile. When Batman is decoying the police, he tells the autodriven car to go on "Evasive." As it's never seen again or mentioned in the script, perhaps it's still evading the police nine days later!

The script sets up more interest for Robin in the projected next film; as he never appears in costume, and indeed, is never given a last name, Dick's character can be explored further. One interesting moment in the script did come when Vicki looked at the costume on a hanger and realized that the "R" on the chest meant "Richard."

Since *Batman II* is probably Sam Hamm's last work on Batman in the film world, it exists as an intersting study in conflicts. Hamm's ideas and adherence to the Batman mythos, contrasted with the differing mythos of the film. Whether or not the Waters-Strick *Batman Returns* will be as interesting a movie is up to the future to tell.

BACKSTAGE TO THE FUTURE

Next month, we'll venture behind the scenes to reveal the goings-on of *Batman Returns*, with special guest-appearances by Sean Young, Tim Burton, Madonna , Danny DeVito, Cher, John Wesley Shipp, Mary Hart, and cartoonist Brian Buniak! All for our red-hot 200th issue! We'll see you next month. . ."Backstage"! ●


BITCHY BITCH goes to FANTAGRAPHICS
WOW, cool. FANTAGRAFIX The cutting edge of alternative comics by the best cartoonists working today and I have the privilege of LOOKING for them! Thank you, God!
Fantagraphics Mascots
Friendly Can from Next Door
MANIC SQUIRREL
Dead Rat

A FEW WORDS with ROBERTA GREGORY

"Crazy Bitches," from *Naughty Bits* #1.

Roberta Gregory is one of those artists who has worked 15 years to become an overnight success.

Currently, she splits her time between her job as a production person at Fantagraphics and her drawing table. The woman has done a lot of quality work, but, as she said in the cover letter that accompanied the mountain of material she sent me, sometimes it seems like "a woman has to do *twice* as much as a man to get *half* as far...!" In the course of our interview, I discovered that she must have written the statement in an uncharacteristically cynical moment because Roberta Gregory is undoubtedly one of the most pleasant, fair-minded, well centered individuals I've ever interviewed. On the other hand, keep in mind that this is the woman who created Bitchy Bitch . . . .

JEFF LANG: *What's it like working at Fantagraphics? Is it anything like what appears in "Bitchy Bitch Goes to Fantagraphics?"*

ROBERTA GREGORY: Oh, yeah, the place is a pig sty. People have come and seen Fantagraphics after they've seen the cartoon and they say, "Before I saw the cartoon, I wasn't quite sure what you were talking about, but now that I've seen it, I think I know." It's this ramshackle house and it's not designed for office space. There's not enough storage or shelving and there's stuff everywhere.

But what's it like as a job? It's a lot of fun. It's ruined me for a straight job, one of those kind where you have to punch in or be there on certain days. It's a good job for an artist.

I started out on the low end of the totem pole doing a lot of paste up, a lot of camera work. In the *Comics Journal* and *Amazing Heroes*, there are tons of pictures that are statted from comic books and half-tones from color covers, so there's a person in the darkroom almost around the clock and

I know it SMELLS bad, but just think how PRETTY you'll look with a Permanent!
OW...
KID HOME PERM
OH, AREN'T YOU LOVELY! .. you look like such a little LADY!

In *Naughty Bits:* what helped make Bitsy Bitch (above) into 'ole Bitchy Bitch (below).

I was a little darkroom coolie. I think that's when I flipped out and did "Crazy Bitches."

LANG: *"Crazy Bitches" is the first story in* Naughty Bits *#1. What inspired you to write it?*

GREGORY: People have said to me that they thought "Crazy Bitches" seemed like I was getting this emotional stuff out of me, but it was really intended to be an intellectual exercise. I had been looking at this Robert Crumb stuff and thinking, "How can he get away with drawing this?" He uses this really cute, bouncy, goofy style to show men who are cutting the breasts off women and shitting on them. So, I though, what if I did a really cartoony style comic of women brutalizing a guy? Would people take it as seriously as they obviously don't take Crumb's stuff? Crumb's comics didn't really bother me when I first read them because they were just so goofy. I just sort of took it for granted even though I was a raging feminist. I figured, "This guy has a hang-up about women, isn't that funny?"

So, anyway, I came up with this story that was totally cartoony. Part of the reason I drew it cartoony is that I don't think I could have stood to draw it realistically. I'm pretty squeamish—I don't like horror comics or horror movies. So, it was a totally differnt style—sort of Peter Baggeish. Well, all I heard for a while after that were jokes about biting guy's penises off, so it obviously made an impression. I'm not really sure how my intellectual experiment worked, but, like I said, I didn't do it out of any kind of gut feeling—"Let's show these dreadful men."

LANG: *What kind of reactions have you had from men?*

GREGORY: I went to a comics convention in Idaho and there was this one guy who looked at it and then just *glared* at me afterwards. He said, "Thanks to you, I'm never going to have oral sex with a woman again." [*laughter*] I thought, "Some woman is going to be really lucky and she's not going to know who to thank." [*more laughter*] He was serious. I really traumatized him.

LANG: *Good for you.*

GREGORY: God, but they're just cartoons! I think it's because this society is so used to seeing these mildly degrading images of women and we've internalized them. Like I said, a lot of it doesn't even bother *me* because it's so much a part of our culture, but if you do something like "Crazy Bitches" and people aren't used to it, it makes you realize what a discrepancy there is between images of women as victims and guys as victims of women.

LANG: *In Issue #3 of* Naughty Bits, *we meet Bitsy Bitch and begin to get an idea of how Bitchy Bitch came to be.*

GREGORY: Yeah, it's so sad. Did you see #4? It's Bitsy's Christmas story. Christmas is, of course, at Uncle Stanley and Aunt Edna's. It's just as dreary. [*Note: In issue #3, Bitsy is sexually abused by her Uncle Stanley—JL*]

LANG: *I love the way you represent Bitsy's mother as having no eyes or*

I've got an idea- instead of sitting here watching TV...
..Lets you and me go out to a clearing and you can braid flowers into my mane and we'll dance in the moonlight!
I... There AREN'T any clearings around here.. 2. Flowers are too expensive. 3. We could get mugged 4. I have to get up early in the morning to go to work 5
Sigh

Sheila and the Unicorn: a relationship bordering on fantasy.

nose, just this giant, constantly smiling mouth. Where did that come from?

GREGORY: I wanted to make her an anonymous '50s monster mother. Some people have looked at that and said, "Gee, that's what grown-ups look like to kids."

LANG: *What kind of reactions are you getting from women about* Naughty Bits*?*

GREGORY: Women are saying that it's like therapy. One woman said that it's like Erma Bombeck. I think it's deceptively cartoony, but there's a lot of meat to it. Like the little child abuse bit buried in a slapstick story. There's a really loaded situation and then you go on to a bit where these kids are tormenting another kid on the school bus. Almost all the reaction I've gotten has been pretty positive. There was this one fellow who wrote in who said his girlfriend didn't like it, but she sounded like a really hardcore feminist, a really politically correct kind of person, and she thought it went a little too far.

LANG: *How hardcore a feminist are you?*

GREGORY: Who, me? I'm not at all. I'm pretty easy-going, or at least I think so. The people at Fantagraphics try to set me off, but I'm from L.A. for Christ's sake. It takes a lot to bother me.

LANG: *How did you come to do* Sheila and the Unicorn*?*

GREGORY: My father was always bugging me to do a newspaper strip. It was his idea of success—something in the daily paper that I would make more than 10,000 dollars a year on. [*laughter*]

I'm not really sure where the story came from, except I wanted to satirize that period when unicorns were really popular. I'm not a cynical bitch like Sheila—I'm one of the nice people who likes unicorns, but I had this scenario about this unicorn and this woman and they're on completely different wavelengths. I was probably in a bad relationship at the time. The story just wrote itself in little three panel increments. I've never even sent the strip to a newspaper syndicate because the idea of churning out gag after gag every day. . . .well, you've seen my work; everything's in a different style, I'd go nuts. I just got the idea for "A Product," something all in one book. I just sort of put it together. [*pause*] You can tell this wasn't one of my favorite projects.

LANG: *Yeah, I can, but I found it interesting that in the end, it turned kind of bittersweet.*

GREGORY: Yeah, it turned into a little fable.

LANG: *It wasn't what I was expecting.* Artistic Licentiousness *wasn't what I was expecting either.*

GREGORY: What were you expecting?

LANG: *Well, when I think of licentiousness, I think of something kind of bawdy.*

GREGORY: Basically, it's about casual sex. It isn't about loving relationships. None of these relationships are based on loving or caring, but on lust, one way or another.

LANG: *How did you end up doing the book?*

GREGORY: Well, Michael Dowers, a small publisher here in Seattle, really liked my stuff and asked me if I was interested in doing an adult comic and I said that I was, but only if it had a real story to it which was what he wanted. It's been called a "Not Erotic Comic" because eroticism is about the suspension of disbelief.

LANG: *It's anti-erotic. It takes the myth of a casual encounter and unveils it. You're saying, "No, sorry, this is what it's really like," and worse, this is what the other person is thinking.*

GREGORY: At least for these two

Artistic Licentiousness: a relationship based on reality...

Looks like we have forty minutes before my bus.. You'd be SURPRISED how much can get done in forty minutes.. :Smirk:
Y-YEAH! :chuckle:
Oh, no!
Wish I'd read more Underground Comix...
But this guys never TOUCHED a girl before! ..at least I haven't much chance of CATCHING— anything..
Wow! Jennifer's really HOT... maybe she's SICK of creeps like Mitch... Can't wait to have him seeing her going out with ME for a change...
Hey, go for it... I'll never have to deal with this guy again!

...Kevin.. we BOTH want it, don't we? No.. Let's get right down to.. NO!...
In the MOVIES people just give each other the EYE, and the next scene they're DOING it...
Guess there's no graceful way to back out NOW.. da- what the hell..
Denise- you look so.. NO! I sure would like to.. NO!
uh..
I'm SURE he's not carrying anything... I'm premenstrual, so there's less chance of a nasty accident— c'mon, guy.. RELAX!
So, THIS is how it happens... It just HAPPENS! I wonder why it seems like such a big problem..

and expectations colliding with reality.

people.

LANG: *Yeah, I'm sure somebody somewhere has had a casual sexual encouter that was fun. I don't know anyone myself. . . . Let's go back to your earlier stuff now. I felt it was a lot more political and . . . .*

GREGORY: Which ones?

LANG: *Like* Dynamite Damsels *is very intense. . . .*

GREGORY: Angst-ridden. Yeah, it was a product of the times. People actually thought about and worried about what to call themselves, the political correctness of just about every aspect of their lives. I came up with a character who is very idealistic, but different things keep bursting her bubble. It's been a while since I read it, but I think she seems to find herself in the end.

LANG: *I was surprised at how political it was. You had a message you wanted to get across.*

GREGORY: Well, like I said, it was a product of its time. It was the first comic that one woman actually did. I had done a few stories for *Wimmen's Comix* and I had talked to one of their editors and she said that they were having trouble selling it to bookstores because it wasn't politically correct and lesbian enough. I had a strip going in the Women's Resource Center newsletter at the university I was going to that starred Frieda, *Dynamite Damsels'* main character, so that kind of spurred me. I had a summer off and I just sort of went crazy and put together this really feminist comic book.

LANG: *What about the future? What do you have planned for the next little while?*

GREGORY: I'd like to do a sequel to *Artistic Licentiousness.*

LANG: *With the same characters?*

GREGORY: I'd like to pull in some other characters, but that's really on the back burner. More *Naughty Bits* with as many episodes of Bitchy Bitch, Bitsy Bitch, and Teen Bitch.

LANG: *Teen Bitch? There are going to be a lot of fans for that.*

GREGORY: I just made that up. There are episodes that I've been visualizing that take place between Bitsy and Bitchy. I'm doing some short stories. I like doing stories with animals and nature and I find drawing city streets stressful and I've come to the conclusion that I only want to draw what I like drawing.

I'm doing a 9-page story for *ZU*, a MU Press book, not a typical funny animal comic. Chris Oliveros asked me to do some stories for *Drawn & Quarterly.* There's a project with Donna Barr that we've only been discussing, but I think we're going to start working on it soon. Originally, it was going to be a twisted erotic comic, but every time we talk about it, it changes.

I've just decided to go gung-ho. This is the first time I've ever been working a part time job. All the other stuff was done after coming home from a 40-hour work week. It's my top priority in life and I hope it just doesn't turn out to be a raging mistake. ●

Dynamite Damsels: humor in a political vein.

COMES THE MORNING PAPER...
IT'S WORSE THAN I EXPECTED! THERE I AM, GETTIN' MY HEAD STOMPED ON THE FRONT PAGE...
DAILY BUGLE
HOUSEWIVES BEAT UP LUMBER- IN UP LUMBER- IN FEM "UNITY" RALLY
"... ACCORDING TO THE BRALESS AND BELLICOSE LEADER OF THE ANGRY WOMEN'S LIBBERS..." I GUESS THAT'S YOU, FRIEDA...
SOMETIMES THERE'S A FINE LINE BETWEEN VICTORY AND DEFEAT!

BY ROBERTA GREGORY

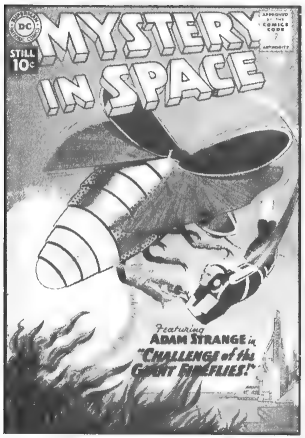
Wimmen's Comix #'s 4,6,7,10 (Last Gasp) 14,16 (Rip Off Press)
Dynamite Damsels (self-published)
Tits & Clits #'s 3,4,6 (Nanny Goat Productions)
Gay Comix #'s 1-4 (Kitchen Sink) 5-7, 10-14 (Bob Ross)
Winging it (Solo Productions)
Sheila and the Unicorn (Solo Productions)
STRIP AIDS USA (Last Gasp)
Choices (Angry Isis)
Graphic Story Monthly #6 (Fantagraphics)
Real Stuff #2 (Fantagraphics)
Naughty Bits # 1-4 (Fantagraphics)
Artistic Licentiousness #1 (Starhead Comix)
Johnny #1 (New Voice Comics)
Drawn & Quarterly #7 (Drawn & Quarterly)
ZU (MU Press)

Don Rosa's COVER GALLERY

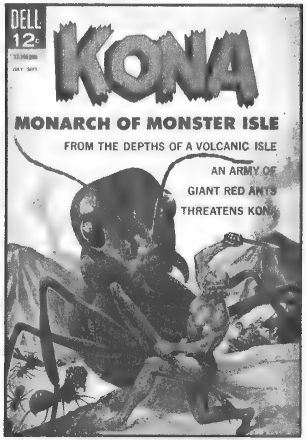
In honor of this being the Chinese New Year, I offer you funnybook covers with BIG BUGS, this being the Chinese Year of the Very Large Insect. [*Actually, it's the Year of the Monkey, Don—as if you couldn't find any of* those *in old DC Comics!—TH*]

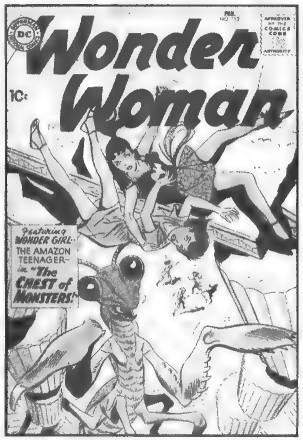
Superman #110 boasts "The Defeat of Superman," and that giant bug-bird-robot-lookin' thing turns out to be the handiwork of Lex Luthor. Next, the comics first mutant super-hero, Captain Comet, meets giant bugs and tiny people in *Strange Adventures* #33. *Mystery in Space* #67 features gigantic fireflies that set cities afire with their tail lights. . . oh, I'm SO SURE! In *Whiz* #150, the Big Red Cheese meets ants that are not merely GIANT, but when you punch them they blow up real good! When Superman looks up and sees Jimmy Olsen riding an enormous red ant that's carrying a Green Kryptonite boulder (*Jimmy Olsen* #54), he knows it's gonna be another one a' those days! Next, just compare the ant on *Kona* #7 to the ant on that *Superman* #110, and tell me which artist had his Roger Tory Peterson handbooks nearby. Finally, we have *Wonder Woman* #112 and *Mister Mystery* #3 (can you read the "*Mystery?*"); Andru & Esposito knew that a praying mantis is the most ferocious and scary giant bug there could be!

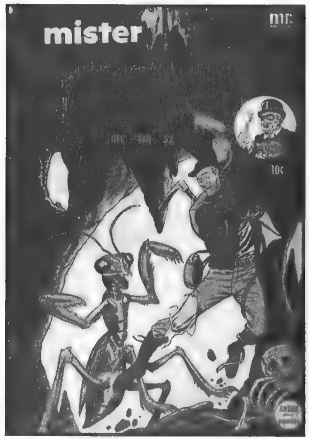
STRANGE ADVENTURES
YES, CAPTAIN COMET, THIS IS WORLD WAR III — YOUR PUNY HUMAN RACE AGAINST OUR SUPER OR BEE CIVILIZATION! AND WE ALREADY HAVE WON THE FIRST BATTLE WITH OUR RADUCTO RAY!



SUPERMAN'S PAL
JIMMY OLSEN
10¢
MOVE CLOSER TO SUPERMAN WITH THAT KRYPTONITE, LLANIA! HE IS OUR ENEMY!
I OBEY, MASTER OLSEN. WE MUST DESTROY SUPERMAN IF WE ARE TO RULE THE WORLD!
Featuring
JIMMY OLSEN at
"KING of the GIANT ANTS!"







REviews

DOC SAVAGE: THE MAN OF BRONZE #1

Written by MARK ELLIS; illustrated by DARRYL BANKS, ROBERT LEWIS and DEIRDRE DELAY; edited by PAUL DAVIS. Published by MILLENNIUM COMICS.

Doc Savage goes into action again in Innovation's *Doc Savage* #1.

Doc Savage is special to me. I was about twelve years old when I first started gobbling up the paperback editions of Doc's pulp exploits from the 1930's and '40s, and I stayed with The Man of Bronze until Bantam Books completed its reprint program last year. Along the way I've sampled all the *Doc Savage* comic book series generated by Marvel and DC and found all of them wanting—when it comes to Dr. Clark Savage, Jr. and his friends I admit it, I'm a purist.

So who better to examine the first issue of Milennium's four-part *Doc Savage* comic?

Let me give you the bottom line right off: this is the best comic book adaptation of Doc and his milieu ever produced. Artists Banks, Lewis, and Delay give us a delightfully art deco New York, and when they focus in on the specific trappings of Doc Savage's world—the library of his 86th-floor skyscraper headquarters, the Hidalgo Trading Company warehouse that serves as his airplane and submarine hangar—their renderings strike the proper chords. I also approve of their treatment of Doc and his five crime-fighting allies (though personally I think Ham should be dressed far nattier than depicted here).

A lot of homework was done here, and it shows. Cover artist Brian Stelfreeze based his portrayal of Doc on James Bama's covers for the Bantam Editions of *The Green Death* and *The Freckled Shark* (the super-scientific pistol in Doc's left-hand is the giveaway, in case you're wondering), and writer Mark Ellis has paid serious attention to chronology: he sets his tale in "late spring, 1938," which allows him to make a passing reference to *The Rocketeer* and to bring back that poetic genius of evil, John Sunlight (the only villain ever to challenge Doc Savage more then once), without violating the timelines of Dave Stevens' graphic novel or of John Sunlight's two prior appearances (in the pulp novels *Fortress of Solitude* and *The Devil Genghis*).

It's not all good news, however—Ellis sems determined to throw everything but the kitchen sink into his plot. This first issue introduces us to Doc, his aides, and much of their background while also tossing in Nazis (silly, comic opera Nazis at that), gangsters, a Russian lama, and a mysterious evil muscleman who undoubtedly hails from some lost race or other. Perhaps all this busy work was deemed necessary to help obscure the fact that John Sunlight's latest scheme (in his words, "The systematic destruction of everything The Man of Bronze holds dear") bears a striking resemblance to what a certain Kingpin of Crime did to a certain hornheaded hero in Miller/Mazzucchelli's "Born Again" cycle for *Daredevil*....

I also have some disagreements with Ellis's handling of the bronze man. Doc would never unload his emotional baggage on his aides the way it's staged on pages 12-14, and he talks entirely too much during the fight scene on page 26. But what really made my alarms and sirens go off was the two pages of first-person narration on pages 24-25. I know first-person is de rigeur with comics scripters these days, but it's impossible to keep your hero a "man of mystery" when the audience is privy to his every thought! Lester Dent and the other writers who produced *Doc Savage* pulps understood this (only five Doc novels are written in first-person, and their narrators are all outsiders who end up embroiled in one of the bronze man's cases). Today's Doc scribes should understand this, too (as should *Batman* and *Daredevil* writers, come to think of it).

Despite these criticisms, remember what I said four paragraphs ago—though this is a "dumbed-down" Doc, it's still the best translation of The Man of Bronze into comics ever. It's good enough so I'll stick around for the next three issues (and I urge you to do the same), which should make Milennium happy. And if it makes those of you who have never read a *Doc Savage* novel seek out one of the original pulp adventures, then I'll be happy.

You don't want a cranky comic book reviewer on your hands, do you?

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ***—Bruce Canwell***

BATMAN: HOLY TERROR

Written by ALAN BRENNERT; illustrated by NORM BREYFOGLE; edited by DENNY O'NEIL. Published by DC Comics.

Holy Terror centers around the idea of what might have happened had Oliver Cromwell (who led the historic Puritan revolt which overthrew Charles I) had not died in 1658 but had lived ten years longer, and what that effect would have had on America.

Batman artist Norman Breyfogle gives us a "Gotham Towne" of sweeping cathedrals, neo-colonial houses, and Victorian style clothing with Renaissance ruffles all hovering under dark shadows and gargoyles. Alan Brennert's American vision is one of a theocratic state with harsh biblical-founded rules, where unruly citizens are assassinated by the order of a Holy Inquistition. So, with Bruce Wayne's origins in mind, we know who's been killed, don't we?

We also know why such a system would order the deaths of those it saw as opposed to "their right;" because under totalitarianism, plurality cannot exist. Individualism leads to free thought, which is the precursor of freedom.

Sprinkled throughout *Holy Terror* are signs that there is very little freedom to be had in this alternate reality. Through occasional televangelist broadcasts we are treated to such heinous crimes as "support for [Nobel Prize winner] Isaac Singer," "anti-reproductive activities," and the ever-popular "sedition." After reading this, you can't help but get the sense that you could probably be tried for "anti-state activites" simply for walking into a park with a boom-box and playing Def Leppard's *Animal*.

Despite the overwhelmingly horrific vision of *Holy Terror*, there is nonetheless a decent revenge storyline brought out of it. Trodding past the corpses of his family and people who might have been friends, Bruce Wayne reaches an understanding of his world and a decision of what he can do about it. Alan Brennert's smooth handling of this man and his world is every bit as masterful as his artistic teammates, Breyfogle and colorist Lovern Kinderzieski. Such a fine rendering of proper colors and placing of proper spectrums I have not seen for a long time!

Most appealing about this story's world is that there are very few changes involved. Prominent DC characters make cameo appearences throughout the story, although some—like a church-brainwashed Zatanna—play more dramatic roles. Their fates here are chilling, and there remains an overriding sense of foreboding, and an eerie undercurrent of fear as you wonder, "If this is what would have happened to Flash, what about....?"

For me, that's what a What If story should give you: tantalizing reading so strong and haunting that you want more.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ★ ***Lawrence H. Burdick***

TYRANNOSAURUS TEX #3

Written by JAMES VAN HISE; illustrated by RON WILBER; edited by RYDER WINDHAM. Published by MONSTER COMICS.

Tyrannosaurus Tex #3: A straightforward adventure yarn, but not much else.

On an alien planet, four poachers have captured the two custodians of a research facility in an area teeming with dinosaurs. The poachers intend to steal some eggs and then kill our two heroes.

Such is the situation at the opening of *Tyrannosaurus Tex* #3. Needless to say, the poachers are not successful in their mission. The two good guys, Tex and Jessie, prove too resourceful and tough for them. By issue's end, three of the poachers are dead and the fourth is a captive.

There are some nice bits in this adventure. In particular, the poacher's overconfidence and unfamiliarity with the surroundings, though rather stereotypical, are used to good effect. Unlike some such tales, it makes sense that the poachers thought they would be successful at the same time that it makes sense that they are not. Tex and Jessie pull a few tricks on them, but they are tricks that are believable and well portrayed.

Though not perfect, the artwork is

SCIENCE AND HOW IT RELATES TO THE UNIVERSE AND IT'S CREATION IS A MYSTERIOUS AND BEAUTIFUL THING.
OUR MINDS HOLD ALL THE KEYS...SCIENCE IS MERELY THE ART OF FINDING WHICH KEY FITS WHICH LOCKS.
EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE.
BOY, I'LL SAY!
TIME TO GET A CLONE.
YES...TAH MINE MOUNTAIN IS VIRTUALLY HOLLOW. THE MOUNTAINS NATURAL CAVERNS AND TAH MINING HAVE MADE IT SO I'M CONFIDENT WE CAN CATCH A CLONE AND TEST THE SERUM.

Madman: A surrealistic comic book.

effective in telling the story, if not always at capturing the moods of the participants.

This is a nice, straightforward adventure yarn. Unfortunately, it doesn't go much beyond that. Still it is a "fun" read.

GRADE: ★ ★ ½ —*TM Maple*

MADMAN

Written and illustrated by M. DALTON ALLRED; Published by TUNDRA.

This is a particularly surrealistic comic book.

Madman is the nameless narrator, and the comic book is designed as though he is also its writer, artist, and publisher. He is a costumed superhero who can read minds. Or is this part of his madness? It's up to the reader to decide how much of the story is real and how much is a madman's delusions.

Like *Edward Scissorhands*, the Madman is an innocent who is thrown out into an unfamiliar world when his mentor dies. Was Dr. Boiffard a scientific genius who created the Madman as a super-hero, or a psychiatrist who allowed his patient to dress up in a costume as therapy? Is the evil Monstadt a villain seeking to steal Dr. Boiffard's secrets, or another lunatic who bullies the other inmates of an asylum? Can the Madman really read people's minds when he touches them, or does he imagine it? Does he keep stumbling across criminals who must be subdued, or is he, Don Quixote-like, terrorizng innocent people? What if gravity failed and we all started spinning off into the sky? (His mind wanders like that.)

Reading *Madman* is like reading a costumed-hero comic book planned by Kafka or Lewis Carrol. There is no beginning and no end. Seemingly unrelated sequences segue past each other, making sense as you read them but leading nowhere. It's bizarre, yet it shows talent. There is good crime-fighting action, whether it's real or imagined. Dialogue is realistic. This is interesting egough that you'll hope that it is not a one-shot and that further issues will show what happens to the Madman next.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ½ —*Fred Patton*

STAR WARS: DARK EMPIRE #1

Written by TOM VEITCH; illustrated by CAM KENNEDY; edited by BARBARA KESEL. Published by DARK HORSE COMICS

With rumors of George Lucas planning a new Star Wars movie, we're on the verge of a Star Wars renaissance. (This makes me realize that it's been almost *fifteen years* since the original movie—ouch! Half the comics readers today probably weren't even *born* when Luke and Leia and Han originally swashbuckled their way into our imaginations!) Dark Horse gives us an original new Star Wars story in a six-issue mini-series, and the spirit of the Jedi knight tradition is all here.

Overall, the first issue is quite attractive, but the book has its good points and bad points. Let me just tick them off.

First the good points: Tom Veitch's dialogue is perfect—snappy and witty, beautifully capturing the characters' essence. Example: As Leia and Han Solo fend off some baddies, the idealistic Jedi Leia plays mind games with them using the Force. She says, "Luke taught me this—faster than a blaster, and a lot less messy!" Han's reply: "I don't know, dear. . .I think I prefer a blaster." Even R2D2's "dialogue" is captured perfectly: "Brrt—bip-bip bdweet!" This is not all retro-writing, however. Luke has matured into a charismatic Jedi Master, a worthy successor to Obi-Wan Kenobi and Yoda. He is confident, commanding, and mysterious.

The art is wonderful. Cam Kennedy has captured the likenesses of the characters without the strain that too often plagues artists trying to replicate real actors. His spaceships and weaponry are especially top-notch.

Now the bad points. The premise: The Rebels' victory was short-lived without the full contingent of Jedi Knights that formed the original Republic. The Empire is back in power, though there is factional infighting. This diminishes the exhilirating victory of the movie series and falls back on retread concepts. I would have preferred to see a *new* menace threaten the New Republic. At this point, too there is no clear-cut "bad guy" ala Darth Vader, but I trust that a worthy nemesis is waiting in the wings.

Lando Calrissian: Originally thrown in the films as an undeveloped token black character, Lando is given nothing by Veitch and Kennedy to advance him as hero or human being.

The coloring: Despite the fine art, the book is colored (by Kennedy, I presume) using a water-color technique. This provides some interesting effects, but overall the palette is monotone. Whole pages awash in purple or green or blue do not let the art shine.

The packaging: The book deserves good paper, but the card-stock cover makes the whole thing over-priced (so what else is new?). Text pages which synopsize the events between the film trilogy and this book are also out of order. A really inexcusable editorial mistake. Shame!

Overall, though I am encouraged by this interesting start to the series. I'm glad to see these old friends again, and they seem to be in hands that care about them and can do them justice. May the Force be with you!

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ —*TK Deen*

ROBIN II: THE JOKER'S WILD! #1-4

Written by CHUCK DIXON; pencilled by TOM LYLE; inked by BOB SMITH; edited by DENNIS O'NEIL. Published by DC COMICS.

I recently reviewed the first issue of this new mini-series and was not impressed. My basic judgment was that, under all the bells and whistles of multiple covers and holograms, the book lacked quality. Now that the series is over, my judgment remains the same: the emperor has no clothes.

The biggest problem with this series is a lack of vision. This *could* have been a defining moment in the modern world of Batman and Robin. The new Robin, Tim Drake, has been around for a couple of years now, and he is still in dire need of some stronger character definition. The moment would have been particularly pregnant this time with Robin's first confrontation with the Joker, given the fact that it was the Joker who offed Tim Drake's predecessor, Jason Todd. In my last review, I complained that in the first issue, Dixon has not capitalized enough on Tim Drake's potential complexity—the straight arrow genius/grim and gritty dichotomy that seems to be developing in his character. Throughout the series, this holds true. The new Robin seems to have acquired a few "guts" by the end, but that's about it.

Not only could this series have been a defining moment for the development of Robin, but for the Joker as well. I believe that this is the first major post-Jack Nicholson Joker appearance, and with all eyes on this truly great character, it would have been an opportune moment to present him with re-energized vision. However, we have here one of the *dullest* Jokers I can remember.

His grand scheme—to bring Gotham City to its knees by taking over computer networks—could have been cooked up by just about any villain. The execution of the scheme has none of the insane earmarks of the true Joker. Oh, sure, firefighters get pink slips, policemen have their paychecks garnished to pay off the city debt, businesses receive 500% property tax surcharges—but where's the *maniacal joke* in all this? Where's the insanity? Where's the twisted imagination? Where the grotesque fear in all of this?

Most importantly, where is the murderous menace that should chill us to the bone when the Joker meets the super-hero he thought he had killed? Oh, sure, he says, "I thought I killed you" and vows revenge at the very end, but again, this could have been a truly great moment in the history of the Joker—and it falls flat.

Besides lack of vision, the series suffers from some of the lamest plotting this side of the Batman TV show. The plot holes that surround the action don't even arouse a chuckle in their incompetence.

The beginning: The Joker, the most dangerous, notorious mass murderer in the country, escapes form Arkham because the asylum guards neglected to check to see if that really was the Joker's mother under those old lady clothes, and they didn't bother investigating the Bible filled with knockout gas "she" brought to her "son." Yeah, right.

The end: The Joker ultimately wants to kill Batman. Of course. So he demands from Gotham a billion dollars in a red truck driven by Batman, delivered on the East Harbor Bridge. His intention: to blow up the bridge while Batman's on it. Now, the Joker *knows* that Batman's appearances throughout this escapade have been Robin's holographic projections. The Joker *knows* that the truck really doesn't contain a billion dollars because Gotham City is broke. So what does the Joker do when he sees the truck on the bridge? Since he *knows* the authorities will do whatever they can do to dupe him, does he check to make sure that that really *is* the Batman in the driver's seat? No. He glances through a telescope at several hundred feet, sees a figure that looks like the Batman, blows up the bridge, and is so dumbfounded that he merely blew up a dummy that Robin can take him out. Yeah, right.

Tom Lyle has come a long way form his early *Starman* days, but the art is merely competent. It's much above the art in the more amateurish independents and the derivativeness of a lot of Marvel hacks, and Lyle has a nice sense of layout, but, as with the story and writing, it does not do justice to the series' possibilities.

The second Robin mini-series can be characterized mostly as a lost opportunity. DC is coasting on the Batman's popularity, and I hope to see much more imaginative work once Bat-mania subsides and the creators have to *earn* accolades. But with the second Bat-film on the horizon, I imagine that this won't happen for a long, long time.

The mediocrity of this whole project deserves nothing better than two stars, but in punishement for the marketing obscenity, *Robin II* gets. . .

GRADE: ★ —*TK Deen*

Robin: The Joker's Wild: "Can be characterized mostly as a lost opportunity."

VIGIL: FALL FROM GRACE#1

Written by ARVIN LOUDERMILK; Illustrated by MIKE IVERSON; Published by INNOVATION

Before I go into particulars, I must say that my review copy is a portfolio of pencilled and finished pages, and so the final product so problems that I mention may be fixed before it goes to press. And believe me, it has plenty.

About the time Ann Rice's *Vampire Lestat* books were beginning to develop their popularity and the *Lost Boys* had hit theaters a strange affliction began among my peers: pale skin, an all black wardrobe, the continuously worn sunglasses, and some even went as far as to get sharpened prosthetic canines. it's true they're vampires.

Batcavers, actually. That's what we called them and soon almost everyone was cursed with vampirism. But like all fads, it eventually died away and now there are only one or two out there living the fantasy, which brings me to the point. Presented well, vampires sell. Especialy to teens, which makes vampires and comic books seem like a match made in heaven.

Not neccessarily.

I opened my preview copy of *Vigil: Fall From Grace* to this note from the creators; "*Vigil* is a modern day vampire story with none of the traditional gothic trappings. Our story takes the concept of vampirism away from the supernatural. These vampires are diseased. The 'creature of the night' stuff is just in their minds." All right, fair enough—a new look on the subject and enough to interest me. The problem is just in the execution.

This is not to say *Vigil* doesn't have potential but it does need work. The major problem is clarity. The story starts in first person as our heroine Grace, an ex-cop now vampire hunting other vampires, beats and kills a man in an alley. On the first reading I though she was avenging her just murdered partner but instead she is beating another man, supposedly a vampire, while remembering her partner's murder. She goes on to a very confusing and cryptic meeting with an informer who tells her nothing and to whom she gives a sack full of blood bags (another vampire?). The police rush in, and in her escape, she brutally breaks a policeman's leg. Not very heroic. What the story really needs is some background and better narration, throwing the reader into the middle of the action works sometimes but this isn't one of them.

The art and production are also severely lacking. Iverson is a competent artist and storyteller but not good. His backgrounds are all rough pencils drawings or photographs, giving an unnatural combination with his drawn characters. Think of Bugs Bunny standing in a Van Gogh painted landscape; both are drawings but incompatible. Also there is no letterer, all the text is done on computer and all the narration is done in caps. Even the most inexperienced typesetter knows that you don't have text in all caps. It is hard to read and isn't very pleasant to the eye.

Overall *Vigil: Fall From Grace* is a good idea lacking severely in execution and I can't recommend it at any price.

GRADE: ★ ½ —*Andrew Herington*

AMERICAN SPLENDOR #16

Written by HARVEY PEKAR; illustrated by VARIOUS; Published by TUNDRA.

The latest collection of vignettes starring one of comics' quirkiest talents is, as always, a mixed bag.

Harvey Pekar writes about incidents from his own life—the more mundane the better—and what he comes up with ranges from the enlightening, to the thought-provoking, to the hilarious, to the occasional unfortunate piece which just sits on the page like a dead weight. The uneven quality of these collections is rendered even more erratic by the changing roster of artists, who range form the excellent to the awful.

Still, Pekar does have a fine ear for human speech, and a fine grasp of his chosen medium, and remains one of the five most interesting people working in this field (even if I have gotten into the habit of making cheap jokes about him). Among the highlights of this latest collection:

"Snake," drawn by Jim Woodring. A small but legitimate observation on the rhythm of joke-telling.

"Bat," drawn by Joe Zabel and Gary Dumm. Another chapter in Harvey's tumultuous love life, this time including a scene where Harvey reacts to a bat flying through an open window. For those of you who may be wondering, here's a clue: he does not exclaim, "That's it! I will become a Bat!" and put on a long black cape to start fighting crime. Though that might have been kind of interesting.

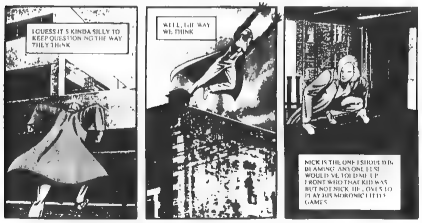
"Serial/Cereal," drawn by Carol Sobocinski, and "The Holy Roman Empire Was Neither Holy Nor Roman Nor An Empire," drawn by Joe Zabel and Gary Dumm. Two of Harvey's annoying conversations with his nerdy co-worker Toby. Toby has been a recurring character in *American Splendor* for some time now, and despite his occasional denseness is one of the more likeable characters in Pekar's universe. Since he knows about the way Pekar uses him, he must be and awfully good sport in real life too.

"Self-Justification," drawn by Frank Stack. A Black reader asks Harvey how he responds to charges of racism in his comics, and Harvey eloquently defends himself to the man for eight story pages, only to castigate himself for not asking him what he thought about 2 Live Crew. The story is not about racism as much as the fine art of reacting to criticism, and it's a goodie.

The longest, and best, piece in the issue, "Easter Island," which is also drawn by Zabel and Dumm, is about Harvey's encounter with an old flame. It's about many things, actually—Harvey doesn't even appear until halfway through the story—but the theme that really works for me is the way it turns out people can affect each other the same ways even after years of being apart. It's a touching, thought-provoking story, with some of Pekar's best writing, even if one panel near the end makes him look like the '60's cult actor Michael J. Pollard.

All in all, a fine entry in the series. But here's one caveat Pekar should take to heart: just because you're trying to convey a dialect, you don't have to resort to the stupid nonsense word "wuz." Stan Lee made this mistake for years, and it always drove me crazy. Because everybody, even Harvard Law professors, pronounces was, "wuz". That's not dialect. That's just the way you say the word, dammit.

Vigil: Fall From Grace #1: Modern vampires.


I GUESS IT'S KINDA SILLY TO KEEP QUESTION NOTHE WAY THEY THINK
WELL, LIE WAY WE THINK
NICK IS THE ONE I SHOULD'VE BEEN WARNING ANYONE I'VE WOULD'VE TOLD ME I'D FRONT WHEN THAT KID WAS BUT NOT NICK !!! ... OVER TO PLAY HIS MORONIC LITTLE GAMES

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ★ —*Adam-Troy Castro*

ELONGATED MAN: EUROPE '92 #1

Written by GERARD JONES; pencilled by MIKE PAROBECK; inked by TY TEMPLETON; edited by BRIAN AUGUSTYN. Published by DC COMICS

In these days of funny super-heroes (a not unexpected reaction to grim 'n' gritty super-heroes), the Elongated Man is a hero whose time has come. I don't know if *anyone* expected ever to hear that, but there it is. This miniseries allows Ralph Dibny to stretch (*groan*) as a character beyond the confines of the Justice League Europe book, and the first issue is promising.

Ralph and his wife Sue are in France to attend a meeting of big-shots who will be dicussing the imminent Europe '92 economic merging. (If you don't know what I'm talking about, put down your *X-Men* and read a newspaper.) With the League disbanded, Ralph has journeyed to France because "there've been some mysteries around these international conferences. And I like nothing more than a mystery," as the pliable detective himself says. And from page 1, Ralphie's nose gets a-twitching with the villainous Copperhead's attack on the French Minister of Economics. The mystery deepens with the arrival of L'Escargot (yes, a man in a big fat snail suit), who kills the ambassador from Belgium by splattering him with disgusting slime. Someone's out to disrupt this conference, and Ralph's going to figure out who!

As the appearance of L'Escargot suggests, the humor that marks EM's appearances in the JLE book is intact. The French's accolades for "L'Homme Etendu" a la their love for Jerry Lewis are particularly wry, and Ralph's purple tuxedo is especially amusing. Gerard Jones handles the humor here and in *JLE* much more effectively than the folks over at *JL-America*, in part because it is so well-balanced with good storytelling—there's an actual *plot* here—and serious plot elements as well.

Regarding the latter, the Dibnys' marriage may be on somewhat shaky ground. Jones had developed Sue into a real person in JLE and continues to do so here, including making her sexy. However, a chance encounter with the charismatic (though mysterious—are those superpowers he's wielding?) Archduke of Modora seems to have undermined Sue's faith in her devotion to Ralph. The dashing duke suggests to Sue that she, the young New York heiress, may have married Ralph, a funny bumpkin from Nebraska who is interested only in following his nose for mysteries, when she was desperate for freedom from the strictures of her class. There is grist for interesting character development here.

The artwork is appropriate. The cartoony lines of Parobeck and Templeton are slightly reminiscent of Jack Cole's Plastic Man, though perhaps I could have gone for a *little* more loopiness. Overall, though, the art meshes well with Jones' thankfully understated humor.

This is a good, solid comic. It has some fun, some mystery, some character development, and even some timely political issues to ponder. If you're an Elongated Man fan or a Justice League fan, or just a fan of decent mainstream comics, this is a good bet.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ —*TK Dean*

Elongated Man: Europe '92 #1: "A good solid comic."

THE WORLD OF CHARLES ADDAMS

Written and illustrated by CHARLES ADDAMS. Published by ALFRED A. KNOPF, INC.

On the cover of my 1975 Pyramid paperback edition of Harlan Ellison's *Paingod & Other Delusions*, the late Robert A. Heinlein describes the book thusly: "This. . . is raw corn liquor—you should serve a whiskbroom with each shot so the customer can brush the sawdust off after he gets up from the floor."

That's exactly how I feel about *The World of Charles Addams*, and it sums up why I advocate you to run (do not walk) to your nearest bookstore and plunk down $30.00 for this wonderful hardcover volume.

If your familiarity with Charles Addams comes from this winter's tepid *Addams Family* film (or from the TV series of the same name, which is considerably better than the movie), then you have many wonders to discover. Born in 1912, Addams became a professional cartoonist, selling his first illustration in 1932. Working primarily for *The New Yorker*, Addams carved a niche for himself as America's number one black humorist—graveyards, vampires, skeletons, voodoo, and all manner of improbable, startling, and gruesome ideas were grist for the Addams' mill.

A typical Addams cartoon shows a stunned golfer and his caddy staring at the tiny "Men Working" sign perched just outside the 8th hole, or

"At least they're not bothering us."

a fakir using the Indian rope trick to hang himself, or a very put-upon housewife carefully rigging a time bomb inside her husband's lunchbox.

The World of Charles Addams presents over three hundred pages of wickedly funny Addams art, culled from the early 1930's to the final pieces that appeared in 1990, shortly after the artist's death. Trust me—there is not a clinker in the bunch. Sometimes Addams was bittersweet (as in the illustration of two unicorns stranded on a rock, the ocean's waves lapping ever higher, while Noah's Ark sails away), sometimes he was wistful (the cartoon where a lighthouse keeper living alone on a rocky promontory finds a valentine washed up on shore), but mostly he exercised his fiendishly playful wit, blazing the trail for artists like Edward Gorey and Gahan Wilson to follow.

For you Addams Family addicts (I count myself among your number), this book is liberally sprinkled with the original Family cartoons. This is the pure stuff, the product of a single creative mind, undiluted by Hollywood's need to appeal to demographics and the lowest common denominator. Here Morticia can tell Wednesday, "Well, don't come whining to me. Go tell (Pugsly) you'll poison him right back," without worrying about corrupting innocent tykes in the audience. You'll even notice Addams was so confident of his draftsmanship and ability to tell a complete story in one panel that he never bothered to name the quirky characters in his family; it wasn't until the TV show that he bothered to come up with names like Gomez & Lurch.

The price tag is steep compared to the cost of the average comic, but *The World of Charles Addams* offers literally hours of enjoyment; this is the kind of book you'll return to again and again. Or, to put it another way, snap your fingers and sing along with me:

"It's wild and it's witty
You might say it's 'damned' pretty
I'll end this little ditty
With a five-star grade!"

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ —**Bruce Canwell**

VIDEO REVIEW

WORD BALLOONS: INTERVIEWS WITH COMICS FOLK

Written produced and hosted by KEITH DeCANDIDO.

The cool thing about reviewing a videotape is that you can fast-forward through the really boring stuff. Unfortunately, that doesn't work very well when the entire show consists of people sitting in chairs, talking.

Word Balloons is an hour long program of interviews with a variety of people in the comics industry. It can be seen on cable TV in New York and New Jersey, or on videocassette everywhere else. The interview guests in this first episode are Gary Groth, Jo Duffy, Barry Kraus and Michael Luck (co-founders of Karl Art Publishing, a new company), Terry Nantier (NBM publisher), Dennis O'Neil, and Will Eisner.

All the interviews are one-on-one (or two-on-one, in the case of Kraus and Luck) pieces running about ten minutes. Each piece begins with a short introduction by interviewer Keith DeCandido, then it cuts to DeCandido and his guest(s), sitting in chairs in front of a solid blue background, talking. These talking heads are occasionally broken up with shots of comic books or artwork produced by the interviewee, but that's it visually. And it makes for very dull televison. I realize that most shows produced for cable have limited budgets, but there are ways to jazz things up—film the interviews in a comic store, or at a convention, have some artwork or other visuals in the interview room, do some cheesy special effects via the video equipment, or whatever. Otherwise, this might as well be a radio show.

DeCandido seems to have gone to the Merv Griffin/Arsenio Hall school of interviewing. He tries to shmooze with the guests, he giggles at their comments, and he asks very soft questions that enable his guests to go on at length, shilling their various projects. Groth talks about the Misfit Lit exhibition and the Eros Comix line. Duffy previews her upcoming series for Dark Horse and elsewhere. Kraus and Luck go on about their new comic. Nantier lists off most of the NBM titles. It's all sort of like watching an infomercial, except that there's no address or toll free number to order this stuff.

O'Neil and Eisner's pieces are more interesting to listen to, because the two men talk about how they create comics instead of just hyping their most recent books. But for the most part, DeCandido just lets his guests go on and on and on, until they run out of things to say about what they're promoting.

Occasionally, near the end of an interview, something interesting will be said, such as Duffy's comments about sexism and sexual harassment in the comic industry, or Groth's justification of the Eros line, but DeCandido never really picks up on these things. It's just more lightweight questions, and then the interview's over and we're introduced to the next person.

Despite all this, I don't think that a regular cable interview show with comic people is a bad idea. With some fine-tuning and a little more creativity, DeCandido and company could be producing a neat little show. But this episode of *Word Balloons* is something that I can only recommend to people who get it for free on their local cable systems.

GRADE: ★ ★ —**Leonard S Wong**

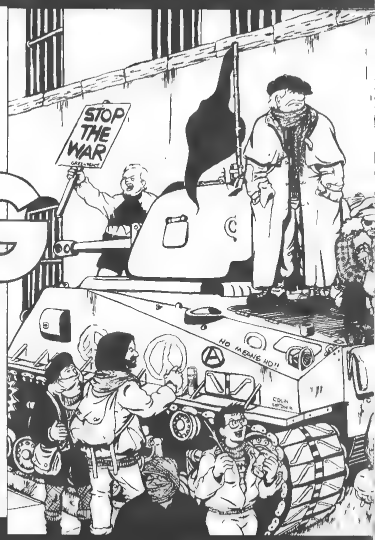
THEY OWN THE TV NETWORKS
THE NEWSPAPERS
THE MAGAZINES
THE RADIO STATIONS

IT'S INCREDIBLE! THOUSANDS ARE DYING THAT WERE NOT ALLOWED TO SEE! WHERE ARE YOU HIDING THE BODIES?
SORRY, I'M NOT ALLOWED TO SAY ANYTHING!

ALL I GOT IS THIS LOUSY COMIC BOOK

Colin Upton's Other

BIG THING



ISSUE #3: THE HOME FRONT

A personal account of the Gulf War from the street protests, Flag Burnings and the view from my TV.

From your friendly neighbour to the North and

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Please send me
The following issues:
__ BIG THING #1 ($3.25)
__ BIG THING #2 ($2.75)
__ BIG THING #3 ($2.75)

Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____

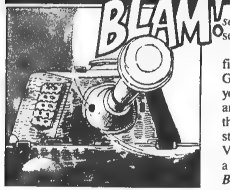
FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS
7563 Lake City Way NE
Seattle, WA 98115
Foreign Orders add 15 percent

"WAITING FOR THE NEXT BIG THING!"

HISTORY

WAR & TRUTH

by T.K. Dean



SGT. ROCK #20
Written by JOE KUBERT, ROBERT KANIGHER, and SAM GLANZMAN; illustrated by JOE KUBERT and SAM GLANZMAN; edited by KIM YALE. Published by DC COMICS.

BATTLE GROUP PEIPER #1
Written and illustrated by WAYNE VANSANT; edited by GARY REED. Published by TOME/CALIBER PRESS.

THE SIEGE OF THE ALAMO
Written and illustrated by SHAWN VAN BRIESEN; edited by GARY REED. Published by TOME/CALIBER PRESS.

LOS TEJANOS
Written and illustrated by JACK JACKSON; edited by GARY GROTH. Published by FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Columbus, a greedy gold-monger, enslaved and murdered the natives of the New World.

Abraham Lincoln campaigned on a platform that guaranteed the continuance of slavery in the South.

George Washington and his men did not really suffer so much at Valley Forge; he made it up to garner sympathy back home.

One by one, our historical myths are falling like communist governments. Conservatives, fearful that our culture is being undermined by a tabloid-like obsession with the ugliness of our past, demand a maintenance of our cultural values through the perpetuation of accepted history. Revisionists cry that we must know the truth, which will really set us free. With such emotions running high, history is a hot topic these days. Comic books, never shy about latching onto current preoccupations, are following suit and giving us many new historical stories.

Comics have always had one foot in history, though, particularly with war comics, so let's start with a book that reprints some old chestnuts. *Sgt. Rock* #20 is the "Remember Pearl Harbor" issue, another topic that has undergone new scrutiny. Actually, the book has little to do with Pearl Harbor *per se*, but the Sgt. Rock stories belies sensibilities of another time.

We can see this in the title of the first story, "Stop the War—I Want to Get Off!" "a story that will rock you . . . sock you . . . knock you down—and pick you up again!" Yes, this is the late '60s, and the beginning of the story reads more like it belongs to the Vietnam Era than World War II. It is a tale of "buddies," right out of *China Beach* and Oliver Stone movies, wherein Rock tries to cover the butts of four green grunts during a Nazi tank attack. Thinking that his boys have been killed, Rock runs right up to the tank and shoves grenades into it. The explosion knocks him unconscious as he screams for no more war, and the tale turns old-time military sentimental.

In his delirium, Rock is visited by a phantom "foot-slogger" who shows him visions of history which prove that violent confrontation—and war itself—is sometimes necessary to human existence and freedom. Rock wakes up, discovers his buddies are OK, and determinedly forges ahead, knowing that he must fight to stay free. In its historical context, this story, with its traditional view of war and history, really seems to be an apology for the Vietnam War. Today, the story looks like either a historical artifact or a popular statement of Gulf War patriotism, depending on your perspective.

The other Sgt. Rock story, "I Knew the Unknown Soldier," has a similar theme and plot, with Rock being helped out by a mysterious figure in various difficulties, and it is a paean to the guts and glory of the foot-soldier.

The book also contains three "U.S.S. Stevens" stories by Sam Glanzman with different sensibilities. In the book's only Pearl Harbor story, "Color Me Brave!" we have a heroic black soldier who will never rise in the military commensurate to his bravery at Pearl Harbor. "What do They Know About War?" shows us the suffering of innocent Pacific natives and the piggishness of the American seaman. "Kamikaze" puts us in the mind of a Japanese pilot on his last mission, humanizing him with visions of family, friends, culture, and suffering. Despite their cartoonish morality, these stories seem much more modern in the way they examine multiple aspects of history, offering an interesting counterpoint to the Sgt. Rock tales.

While somewhat dated, these reprinted stories offer glimpses into how the interpretation of history can change. More simply, they offer classic Kubert and Glanzman art, worthy of the price of admission alone.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ½

Let's look at things from the other side of World War II, Deutschland itself. Tome Press should be applauded for its rather risky venture of publishing comics based on historical and cultural topics that will certainly not outsell *X-Men*. These books are very uneven, though. One of the better ones is *Battle Group Peiper* by Wayne Vansant. It tells the story of Joachim Peiper, the youngest Panzer tank regimental commander in the German SS, and the last-ditch German Ardennes offensive of December 1944. Peiper's tenacity in the offensive resulted in unwarranted massacres of American prisoners and Belgian civilians, pillages of Belgian, towns, a decimated regiment, and a humiliating rout.

Vansant interestingly follows up the World War II story with an epilogue depicting Peiper's trial at Dachau, his attempts at living a quiet life in France after being released from prison in 1957, and his death during an ambush on his house by locals in 1976. To the end, Vansant depicts Peiper as a brave man who stood his ground against overwhelming odds, and despite the atrocities he committed, there may be much to admire in such a person.

Vansant's art is quite good—realistic and detailed—and he presents a lot of good historical information. The book is not a particularly dramatic read, though, since the flow of events is often interrupted by (abysmally edited) text pages. And despite the interesting depiction of Peiper, he is not humanized enough to make us feel as much for him as Vansant may want. This entry in Tome's historical books is a mixed success.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★

Tome's version of *The Siege of the Alamo* is, overall, less successful. This one's by Shawn Van Briesen, a vastly inferior artist to Vansant. In particular, Van Briesen's faces are oddly skewed and often indistinguishable from each other. In terms of storytelling, however, Van Briesen does have a better flair for drama and characterization than Vansant. We see many heroes of American history—Jim Bowie, Davy Crockett, William Travis—and Travis in particular is a more rounded character. Davy Crockett, however, is painted in typically broad mythical strokes, a speechifier resembling Captain America, and the ideological bent of this telling of the Alamo story leans toward such gosh-wow apple-pie morality. Santa Anna, the Mexican general who lays siege to the Alamo, is depicted as a Satanic cartoon figure who spouts off lines worthy of Darkseid or Thanos: "Bah! What are lives? They are nothing but sacrifices to the honor of Mexico."

The text pages (again, abysmally edited) are thankfully relegated to before and after the story, but the dramatic rhythm of the tale is askew. Days during the siege when not much happens are given practically as much space as the battle itself, for example. This is an ambitious book that falls flat.

GRADE: ★ ★ ½

Tome's Alamo story is presented as a typical "good-guy" (Anglo-American) versus "bad guy" (Mexican) Western, but a more complex vision of this period of history is presented in Jack Jackson's masterful *Los Tejanos* (The Texians, or The Texans), available again from Fantagraphics. This is a landmark comic and deserves attention once again.

Jackson examines the 19th-century struggle over the fate of Texas not from an over-simplified "American versus Mexico" perspective, but from the more accurate true complexities. "The Texians" of the title are people of Mexican extraction devoted to an independent or federated Texas, and, as so many people are in the course of history, are caught between other competing forces. Despite "Los Tejanos' " desire for a free Texas, the Anglo-Americans viewed them as Mexicans and thus with suspicion. The Mexicans viewed them as traitors to Mexico. Jackson's story focuses on this fascinating political/ethnic struggle through the prism of an important but virtually forgotten figure in the Mexican-American War, Juan N. Seguin.

Jackson presents a more accurate view of history by examining the issues not through single isolated incidents, but rather decades of struggle between the Anglos, the Mexicans, and the Texians. For example, the siege of the Alamo does not end with the Mexicans' bloody victory over Davy Crockett and Willaim Travis; we are also shown the rather quick defeat of Santa Anna that followed in short order. But the war doesn't end there. With an independent Texas, more and more Anglos move into Texas, creating new hostilities between them and Los Tejanos, which causes many Texians to lean back toward government by Mexico and many average folks, tired of the political runaround, just wish the whole thing were over. The processes of history are complex and fluid, not climactic and absolute, and Jackson is careful to show us all the vicissitudes.

More remarkably, Jackson never tries to suggest that this story is "absolute" history. He makes no bones about the fact that this is told from a single perspective. The "enemy" Anglos are portayed not as wronged moral exemplars (like Crockett in Tome's Alamo book), but, for dramatic effect, stereotypically ugly American rednecks. Here's some choice dialogue:

"Wahl, here it is Lem—picturesk ol' San Antone!"

"Let's go look at th' Alamo, and then knock some heads!"

Further, when the mythical version of an event will reflect favorably on his hero, Juan Seguin, Jackson uses it and tells us so; a footnote to Seguin's break through the Mexican lines on Jim Bowie's horse says, "This 'dashing escape' is the mythical version. Juan later said he crept through the Mexican lines on foot, often on all fours, bombs burstsing all around."

Not only is this unabashedly an *interpretation* of history, but it is also a comic book and Jackson does not try to hide that fact—he is happy to use cartoon conventions, such as a thundercloud with a lightning bolt through it in a thought balloon to signify Don Erasmo Seguin's anger. The pompostity of war hero wannabe Felix Huston, who arrives too late after the decisive battle of San Jacinto, is deflated in a classic cartoony panel. Astride his horse, chest out, Huston thinks, "A day late and a dollar short . . .", while a soldier next to him thinks only, "Crap!" The book is full of such laugh panels.

This is *not* a "dramatization" of history the likes of which we see on TV mini-series. All history is interpretation; Jackson just doesn't try to cover it up. But he provides plenty of background information and documentation, also, vastly superior to the text material found in Tome's books. *Los Tejanos* is not only one of the best pieces of comic book work of the last decade, it is fine history, too.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ★ ½

Jaxon's *Los Tejanos:* "One of the best pieces of comic book work of the last decade."

MARVEL

HERE COMES *DAREDEVIL*

by Jason Sacks

MARVEL MASTERWORKS VOL. 17: DAREDEVIL
Written by STAN LEE; illustrated by WALLY WOOD, JOE ORLANDO & BILL EVERETT; edited by TOM BREVOORT.

THE INFINITY GAUNTLET #6
Written by JIM STARLIN; pencilled by RON LIM; inked by JOSEF RUBENSTEIN; edited by CRAIG ANDERSON.

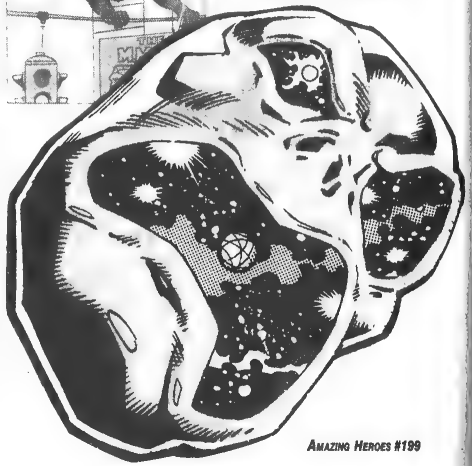
DR. STRANGE, SORCERER SUPREME #37
Written by ROY & DANN THOMAS; plotted by R.J.M. LOFFICIER; illustrated by GEOF ISHERWOOD; edited by MIKE ROCKWITZ.

NAMOR, THE SUB-MARINER #221
Written & pencilled by JOHN BYRNE; inked by BOB WIACEK; edited by TERRY KAVANAGH.

MARVEL HOLIDAY SPECIAL #1
Written & illustrated by VARIOUS; edited by RENEE WITTERSTAETTER.

I had an odd reaction reading *Marvel Masterworks* volume 17 featuring Daredevil. I enjoyed the first of the eleven issues reprinted here for its camp value but by the time I finished issue #11, I was completely charmed. These comics, from 1964 and '65, are a kind of time capsule from a world gone by, a look at the way people lived when times really were simpler. It's sort of like the feelings I get sometimes watching an old episode of *Star Trek* where Captain Kirk manages to get in a good fight, kiss a pretty alien girl, and solve a centuries-old conflict all in the space of one hour. Good always triumphs over evil in these old stories. People are either completely good or evil. Heroes are forthright and brave. The system works. Cynicism has no place in this old-fashioned world.

Sure the dialogue in these old comics is often laughable and the characterization in them is paper thin. That's part of these old comics' charm. The 1964-5 Matt Murdock, Daredevil's alter ego, seems absolutely unbelievable to a reader in 1992. He's a blind lawyer whose only cases come from super-villains using him for their short-term gain. He's always coming and going from his office, hopping over roofs as Deredevil and neglecting his practice. Neither his law partner, Foggy Nelson, nor his secretary, "the gorgeous Karen Page," as she's almost invariably referred to, notice any odor of sweat or see any bruises on his body from Daredevil's adventures. One could go on and on finding faults with this material. But that misses the point.



Left: some Wally Wood *Daredevil*. Below: a cosmic entity from *Infinity Gauntlet*.

Daredevil #1-11 present a world so forthright, so black-and-white in an old-fashioned way, that it's wonderfully refreshing. Evil men (always men) exist, but they only want to rob banks, steal cars or rig elections. Only Namor the Sub-Mariner, the king of Atlantis, wants to rule the world. Heroes are real heroes, sacrificing their social lives, their professional careers, even their bodies, just to defeat an evil-doer in a silly costume. A book like this wouldn't have a chance in hell of surviving today.

So far this sounds like a recommendation of all 17 *Masterworks* volumes. What sets the Daredevil volume apart is its art. The late great Wally Wood had a hand in illustrating seven of the 11 issues here, and his work is an absolute knockout. His use of dramatic angle shots, powerful renderings of action scenes and spectacular panel compostions help to enliven a story like "In Mortal Combat with Sub-Mariner" from a basic hero battle into what Stan Lee in his introduction calls one of his all-time favorite stories.

This book has a tremendous amount of charm and some spectacular art. It's absolutely not the finest of the *Masterworks* books—the Spider-Man and Fantastic Four books contain far better stories. But if you have the $35 to spare and love vintage '60's Marvels, you could do worse. Or in other words, it's not Frank Miller --but it is vintage Wally Wood.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ★

It's hard to imagine a comic presenting more of a contrast from these old *Daredevils* than *The Infinity Gauntlet* #6. Where Daredevil's adventures were down-to-earth to an absurd level, *The Infinity Gauntlet* is as cosmic as any comic I've ever read. This is the trippiest, strangest, most surreal comic I've read in a long time.

I have to admit that I haven't read the first five issues of this series and so I had trouble understanding its storyline. But I did feel the adrenaline rush that writer Jim starlin seemed to want me to have. Huge, colossal, metaphysical battles abound. The Cosmic Beings, a group of nine big, huge, sort of humanoid beings, some with bodies and some with just heads, fight this blue-skinned alien woman called Nebula who has this neat glove they want. Thanos is also there, and so is Adam Warlock, who is not only alive again (he died about ten years ago), but is even more powerful than Nebula. This is very cool stuff really, kind of a cross between a typical Marvel comic and a mindbending Moebius story.

One of the problems with my understanding of this comic's plot lies with Ron Lim's art. His style is reminiscent of George Perez's, which in a way makes him ideal for a comic like this. Unfortunately, Lim's layouts are often confusing. Transitions often seem to occur without explanation, and all too often I just couldn't keep track of scenes. For instance, towards the end of the story, there is a sequence where the Infinity Gauntlet has fallen to the floor. The reader sees a 15-panel sequence of the glove, then Hulk's face, then Nebula's hand, then someone else's face, and a hand and on and on 'till basically a full-page spread when Warlock appears out of nowhere to grab the glove. What happened here? How did Warlock get the glove? Who was winning the battle? I just couldn't make heads or tails of sequences like this.

So *The Infinity Gauntlet* is wild and weird and fun. It doesn't make a hell of a lot of sense to me, but then neither do a lot of things, I suppose.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★

I picked *Dr. Strange* #37 to review based solely on the cover blurb—"Behold . . . Frankensurfer!" I actually chuckled out loud in the comics shop when I read that line. Frankenstein crossed with the Silver Surfer seemed to me to hold the potential to be sort of a *JLI* or *She-Hulk* humorous comic. Too bad writers Roy and Dann Thomas and plotter R.J.M. Lofficier took the idea seriously.

Dr. Strange #37: "Boring junk"

Frankly, this comic is dull. Fully half of *Dr. Strange* #37 is taken up by a history of Marvel's interpretaion of the Frankenstein monster. This reminds me of nothing more than the old *Amazing Heroes* feature "Hero Histories." "Hero Histories' traced the history of comics characters, listing their every appearance. The feature was eventually dropped, in part because of a lack of space, but also because they were so dull. [*Though, ironically, we're reviving it—TH*] Why run a "Hero History" of Frankenstein in *Dr. Strange* of all places? Why waste a reader's time and money with a big pile of six-panel pages detailing the four-color life of some forgotten comics character?

This history would be interesting or at least relevant if it had set up an interesting story. But the plot just seems sketched out in shorthand without taking a minute to let the reader make sense of the whole story. This really would have been more comprehensible stretched out over at least two issues.

Artist Geof Isherwood does what he can. However, seeing as how he was given a quarter of a page to convey the fall of Rome, there wasn't a lot he could do. I expect more out of Roy Thomas than this boring junk. He used to be one of Marvel's finest writers.

GRADE: ★ ½

Namor, the Sub-Mariner #22 seems to me to be a completely typical Marvel super-hero comic. It is neither exceptionally bad nor brilliantly stirring. It is a decent adventure story. Namor is on a quest to find the supposedly dead hero Iron Fist. He travels with Iron Fist's friends Misty Knight and Colleen Wing to Kun'Lun, which has been taken over by living plants, to find him. At the climax of this issue, Namor does find Iron Fist. Plus, Wolverine has a cameo at the very end.

John Byrne's writing and art are completely straightforward but interesting. The story is well-told and a reader can always figure out what's going on. Byrne presents an excellent balance of writing and art, and both are rather compelling in their own ways.

John Byrne is the consummate Marvel professional. In a way, he's the Stan Lee of the '80's and '90's. At his best, Byrne is about the best cartoonist Marvel has. Even when he's doing average work, as he is here, Byrne is better at both writing and art than the majority of Marvel's creators.

GRADE: ★ ★ ½

Marvel Holiday Special #1 is one of those anthology comics that are difficult to review. It crams eight stories, a text feature and a stack of pin-ups into 80 pages. Of course, there are some pieces that stink and others that shine in all of these collections. I was pleasantly surprised that most of the material presented here is rather good.

Each of the stories here fits the spirit of the holiday season in its own way. The Punisher story is a poor fit—the character's cynicism looks petty and out of place here. However, that story does feature some fine Klaus Janson art. There's a Captain America story here that's rather sweet (Cap meets the sister of his late partner Bucky Barnes) but is just too short to plumb its emotional depth. And there's a Fantastic Four story with some typically terrific Art Adams art but some atypically confusing Walt Simonson writing.

My favorite story of the bunch is a Spider-Man story that is a throwback to the charm and optimism of Marvel in the '60s. Spidey and J. Jonah Jameson both show up at a children's hospital. Three kids tell J.J.J. about how Spidey saved their lives in the past. Thus, Jameson learns he should not hate Spider-Man. This isn't exactly realism, but it's as realistic as Marvel comics ever get.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★

DC

A GIANT *HONOR*

by Elizabeth Holden

THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD #1

Written by MIKE GRELL & MIKE BARON; art by SHEA ANTON PENSA; edited by MIKE GOLD.

MY NAME IS... CHAOS! #1

Written by TOM VEITCH; illustrated by JOHN RIDGEWAY; edited by STUART MOORE & KAREN BERGER.

THE RAY #1

Written by JACK C. HARRIS; pencilled by JOE QUESADA; inked by ART NICHOLAS; edited by JIM OWSLEY.

SKULL & BONES #1

Written & illustrated by ED HANIGAN; edited by MIKE GOLD.

STAR TREK: DEBT OF HONOR #1

Written by CHRIS CLAREMONT; pencilled by ADAM HUGHES; inked by KARL STORY.

Team-up comics come and go.

It could be the best of both worlds, a comic free to explore new storylines and re-examine characters old and new.

Unfortunately, it seldom works that way. Most team-up comics present heroes thrown together by chance against second-rate villains (first-rate villains are saved for their regular books).

The Brave and the Bold is a prime example.

The characters featured are the Butcher and Green Arrow, who meet while investigating a terrorist/guerilla training group. Partly because of the uneven art, partly because of a loosely defined plot, the story was difficult to follow.

There were some memorable moments: Green Arrow photographing and tracking, the Butcher's changing speech patterns, his request of Ollie Queen: "Teach me to make arrows. I nearly flunked my Indian test."

Perhaps team-ups with Batman are reserved now for hardcovers. Perhaps the more high-profile heroes were busy this month. Too bad. The idea of a DC team-up comic has great potential , but *The Brave and the Bold* #1 doesn't show it.

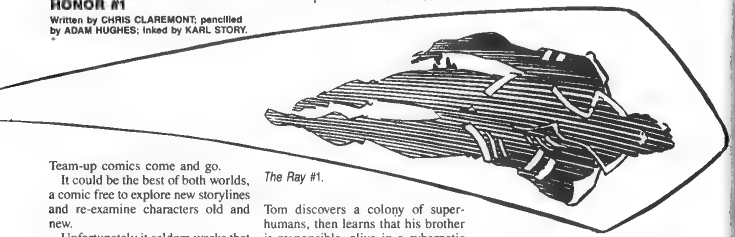
GRADE: ★ ★

Ecology is a hot topic—not just for today's headlines, but a crucial subject for planetary survival.

Early science fiction presented challenges to menace the future: alien monsters invading Earth, man against harsh conditions, exploration into the unknown. The new challenge is survival in a changing environment—a premise that echoes our reality.

Tom Veitch's SF miniseries *My Name is... Chaos* presents a situation of the future, when our world looks like that of Zot's dimension. Under the slick surface, there is suffering and ecological decay.

Tom Valis is a marine biologist who talks to whales with enthusiasm but seldom speaks to his beautiful wife.



The Ray #1.

Tom discovers a colony of superhumans, then learns that his brother is responsible, alive in a cybernetic body. Tom suffers from a mysterious condition of his own, while the "true offspring" of the universe ascends into "the ovum of the night" to apparently, among other things, destroy New York.

Individually, the elements of this story are trite gimmicks from a generation ago. Put together with the superb art of John Ridgway and some genuinely original treatments of old ideas, and the result is an unusally sophisticated comic.

Although none of the characters is particularly endearing, all are distinct individuals. The subtle complexities extend particularly to the created superbeings Joss, War-lover, Iron Maiden, Moron and Builder, who are simultaneously the monsters, saviors and children of their creator.

That creator is perhaps a little too much the mad scientist, and the weakest part of the story lies in his long expositions. At the same time, he is effectively creepy, coherent and clever enought to seem chillingly competent.

The title is ugly. the individual elements of the story are inferior to the whole. This is an occasion where the different aspects of comic book tradition come together and produce something fresh. If the rest of this miniseries lives up to its beginning, it will be well worth reading.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★

There are numerous ways to revive old heroes from bygone days of comics. One is to re-create the character in a more modern mold, with or without his past history attached—Superman, for example. Another is to evolve the character as he was, as in Green Arrow.

There is another method, tried and true but unfashionable these days, of having the old hero pass the torch to his offspring. This has happened with Black Canary and with Ragman. Now it happens again with The Ray.

Light is the basis of the Ray's power. Ray Terrill has been told he is allergic to light since birth, and has lived 18 years in darknesss so his powers would not manifest themselves. A fast-talking cousin learns about his powers and encourages him to use them. Taking his first movements towards a normal life—or at least, a life not entirely lived in darkness—Ray has to decide what he wants to do with his extraordinary abilities.

The decision to use the powers is accelerated when his only girlfriend—and only friend—is kidnapped by bank robbers. He has much to learn; using his powers burns off his pants, for example, proving that even a man of light can blush.

Pretty standard comic book fare? Yes, but presented with style, fast movement, wit and panache. There are holes in the plot which don't matter. There is nothing pretentious here, and there is nothing dark about the hero. This is a comic for those who like comics the way they used to be—good guys using powers.

Joe Quesada's art captures character and action delightfully. Layouts and use of light contrasts are particularly good, as they should be in a comic which is essentially about their interplay.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ½

Skull & Bones #1 sets up something very ambitious, and fails.

This was described as being "so ensconced in the real world that some of the material contained here will be changed in the final publication to reflect up-to-the-minute happenings." It was a surprise therefore, to see the story being when the Russians are fighting in Afghanistan and Perestroika is new.

Political thrillers are a staple of the publishing world, but the genre is rare in comics, where traditionally young audiences want familiar settings and escapism.

The Russian hero was a double agent who turned his back on the Americans to return to Moscow and deal with his enemies, who have invented an AIDS-like virus with which they plan to destroy all non-Russians. In a skeletal costume, the hero infiltrates and joins a band of Russian agents, one of them a beautiful woman, and stays one step ahead of the villainous murderers at his heels.

Behind this is the backdrop of current events in Russia. Well, almost-current events. Publishing schedules can hardly keep up with the rate of change in the U.S.S.R. these days, and it is impressively rash that they should try.

Ed Hanigan's art is painstakingly accurate and generally effective, although not exciting. The same could be said for the writing. The hero's derring-do is mitigated by his elusive qualities: he is a man without background or identity. The large cast of characters features only one female, and she is so much the stereotypical tough-and-beautiful Russian spy that I was hoping for a crack in the veneer for a little personality to shine through.

The villains are standard, too; neo-nazi types too nasty for the KGB, but ready to talk in KBG cliches.

Perhaps the writing would not have seemed so stilted if almost every sentence had not been relentlessly topped with an exclamation mark. There was a "translated from the Russian" sense to the dialogue that might have enhanced the mood if it did not simply sound like bad writing. Phrases in the cyrillic alphabet did little for me, while the alternative was lines like, "Bozhemoi! They're really knocking hell out of those kikes!" or dialogue like this from a car chase: "That's a blind alley! We've got him!" "I would not wager on it, Dmitri... I don't like this fellow very much. I say we give it to him." "For once I am inclined to agree with you, Dmitri."

Really, it's a text-book case of bad writing.

Generally speaking, the mental image of super-heroes in tights is one I accept without question. Spider-Man climbing a wall in his skin-tight costume looks quite normal to me, as does Batman jumping in silhouette against the night sky. Spandex is ultimately practical for athletics, and the "hero in long johns" has never seemed ludicrous to me.

Until now. Seeing Skull and Bones climbing the Kremlin in his halloween costume was just too much.

I would like to see a fast-paced, reality-based political thriller in comics. This isn't it.

GRADE: ★ ½

On the other end of the scale, we have the "grand finale" of DC's celebration of Star Trek's 25th Anniversary, with the graphic novel *Star Trek: Debt of Honor* by Chris Claremont, with art by Adam Hughes.

Forget that I've laughed fondly at *X-Men*'s turgidity. Claremont's writing has its flaws and its excesses, but at its finest is full of depth, humor, action and the varied quirks of human nature. When writing up to his potential, Claremont is one of the finest writers in comics.

The preview copy presented only the beginning of the story, a little more than a quarter of the completed whole. That beginning features some of Claremont's best writing yet, and Adam Hughes' best art.

The story is about Captain Kirk, starting soon after *Star Trek: The Voyage Home*. It is about his memories, and nightmares, about values, and being a stranger at home. It is also about Kirk's early career, when he had to battle insectoid monsters at the side of a Vulcan friend—not Spock, but a woman who proves that not only can Vulcan women be heroic, they can also have charm.

This is style over substance. Shooting phasers at ichor-trailing BEMs is hardly the stuff of maturity, but Claremont and Hughes pull it off with unembarrassed panache, and it was only on reconsideration that I realized the magnitude of the achievement.

There is something here for those who like sci-fi adventure, those who like emotion-based stories of characterization, and for those who want more about the Star Trek universe. If a line or two made me think, incongruously, of *X-Men*, it was not because Kirk wasn't speaking with his distinctive voice.

One line annoyed me: the misuse of "decimated" for "annihilated", which made the sentence it was featured in nonsensical. Claremont is more literate than that, but any writer can have a lapse. How, though, could it have passed by DC editors? Slips like this contribute much to the generally low status of the comic book form.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ★

Skull & Bones #1: a political thriller taking place in the ex-U.S.S.R.

FANTAGRAPHICS YOUNG & CYNICAL

by T.M. Maple

OPTIMISM OF YOUTH: THE UNDERGROUND WORK OF JACK JACKSON

Written by JACK JACKSON; edited by GARY GROTH & KIM THOMPSON.

USAGI YOJIMBO #31

Written and illustrated by STAN SAKAI; Second story written and pencilled by JIM ENGEL; inked by SCOTT SHAW; edited by KIM THOMPSON.

THE EYE OF MONGOMBO #6

Written and illustrated by DOUG GRAY; edited by KIM THOMPSON.

NAUGHTY BITS #3

Written and illustrated by ROBERTA GREGORY with a one-pager by DONNA BARR.

Prior to reading *Optimism of Youth* I knew Jack Jackson (or "Jaxon") primarily for his historical comics. (In my opinion, the best of these is the magnificent *Los Tejanos* set during the battle for the independence of Texas. I recommend it highly.) However, Jackson is also an important figure in the history of underground comics.

In this collection, we see Jackson's work from the early 1970's. The title of this book is no doubt intended as a joke, since the stories are anything but optimistic. The stories are full of post-apocalyptic horrors (or just "plain" horrors) and the brutalites and ignorance of humankind. All of this is done in quite a powerfull manner, showing definite influences from the EC comics of the early 1950's, modified by a typical 1960's attitude towards sex and violence (i.e. lots of it and very openly depicted).

Perhaps the strongest piece in the book, though, is more subtly presented. (However, "subtle" for Jackson is still accomplished with a hammering intensity.) "The Light in the Darkness" is an eerily perceptive and frightening look at dreams and death.

Two stories treat the matter of normality in explicit ways. Both are set in a future when various catastrophies have led to horrific mutations in the human race. In "Gene Shuffle", the beings we view as "normal" are the ones considered to be "mutants" by the majority in society. In "Homesick," a "normal" man who is the leader of a remote colony of mutants finds out that back in "civilization," his kind are dying out and the mutants are taking over. He is one of the last of his kind, a freak of nature.

Oddly enough, though the two stories show similar concepts, "Homesick" was written by Tom Veitch. Jackson only illustrated it, though he wrote and illustrated all other stories in the book.

Other stories demonstrate Jackson's interest in historical matters, presaging his future work. Though set in the present, "The Intruder" uses the setting of ancient Mexico to good effect, as a professor searches for immortality. In "Death Rattle," Jackson tackles historical fiction in a story with a "humorous twist ending" set against the background of gladiatorial combat in ancient Mexico.

There are also several rather weak stories. "Testicles the Tautologist" is a heavy-handed parody of Conan the Barbarian, while "The Hound" is a more or less pointless horror story. Slightly better is "The Secret," probably the most obviously EC-influenced story in the bunch, but one marred by a clear telegraphing of the "twist" ending (complete with the EC-style "Choke" at the climactic moment).

Finally, there are the stories that center around explicit sexual themes, such as "Pussy Whipped" and "Tales of the Leather Nun's Grandmother." They are not without a certain flair, but one is forced to agree with the sentiment expressed by one character in the latter tale: "The lengths these artists will go to just to draw" such a story, he (it?) says in wondering disgust.

Still, there is much *good* wonder in this hard-hitting collection, which also affords an excellent look at an important era in comics history.

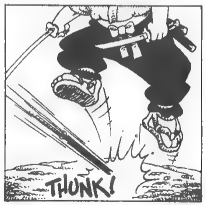
GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ½

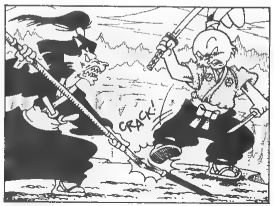
I've got to admit that it's been a long time (well, actually, a long, long, time) since I read a Usagi Yojimbo story. I guess I'm just not a "funny animal" kind of guy. Maybe I'm simply dense (a *distinct* possibility!), but I often don't see *why* the stories have to be done with funny animals instead of human beings.

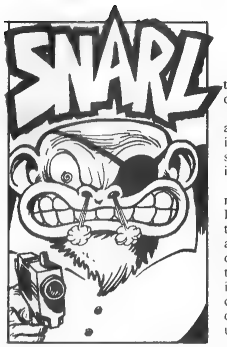
The opening of *Usagi Yojimbo* #31 did little to kindle my enthusiasm, as it was just one long fight sequence (though a rather well done fight sequence, I should add). However, this was followed by a very tender and emotional scene between Usagi and Mariko, concerning the nature of their love and the status of Mariko's family. What could easily have turned into a manipulative tearjerker was instead made into a finely shaded portrait of love and despair by Sakai. The story was concluded by a fine exchange between Usagi and his "nephew," Jotaro. The childish ebullience of Jotaro contrasted well with Usagi's conflicting emotions as he tried to overcome his sadness so as not to diminish the impact of his last (for a while, at least) chance to interact with the beloved youngster.

I can tell you that it will be a very *short* time until I read my next Usagi Yojimbo story. (About two months, if the publishing schedule holds up.) But I *still* can't see why it had to be done with "funny" animals.

Usagi Yojimbo #31: "A finely shaded portrait of love and despair."







However, I *am* sure why "Penrod and Balboa" is done with funny animals—very funny animals indeed. Okay, so Jim Engel is up to his usual outlandish, off-the-wall slapstick and pseudo-punnish behavior—but there's nothing wrong with that!

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ★

And speaking of "funny animals", *The Eye of Mongombo* has some of those, plus some "funny humans" too.

I must admit that this issue put me off because it exhibited a feature that is a pet peeve of mine in the comics field: Characters who make comments which show that they know they're in a comic book or, worse yet, who speak directly to the reader. I've always felt that this "breaks the spell" for the reader and besides, it's usually not all that funny.

However, the story here does have numerous funny bits and demonstrates a lot of manic intensity to boot. Though I don't like the "self-reference" technique,it is rather well used here and the story is fairly well suited to it. (In other words, I still don't like the technique, but this is one of the better examples of it.)

All in all, this issue features a big merry chase (well, *fairly* merry, what with all of the life-threatening situations) with a lot of rather broad humour and some genuine chuckles. Not bad for a twenty-one-page story.

Not great, but not bad.

GRADE: ★ ★ ½

As I started to read *Naughty Bits*, I must say that I was prepared not to like it. The cover declared that the lead story was "Bitsy Bitch Goes to School" and then on the inside front cover I was confronted with a rather aggressive looking cartoonist and the words "Hah! You think 'Bitchy Bitch' is bad? Well, lemme tell you, she's *nothing* compared to *Comix Bitch*!" There's enough depressing negativity and pointless crudity in the world, I found myself thinking.

However, Bitsy Bitch didn't turn out to be, and the story was not negative or crude at all.

Sure, there were a lot of negative and even crude things in the story, but its overall theme and impact was of a sensitive and insightful look at a day in the life of a young girl.

Now, I was never a young girl myself and it's been a long time since I've been to elementary school, but this struck me as quite a realistic look at the experience and it featured a lot of situations that were quite familiar: the raw emotions of childhood, the insensitivity to others (especially others who are "different"), the desperate desire to "fit in", the uncertainy of how to act and react.

Bitsy herself is far from perfect, but really she's merely ordinary, like most kids. Her one truly ugly act (of prejudice towards a black child) can be seen as an influence from her racist father. As with all children, she picks up a lot of cues from the adults around her, even though their world is largely mysterious to her.

As we reach "The Excruciating End," we might feel depressed at Bitsy's plight. (And the fact that she was sexually abused by her uncle makes her situation all the more genuinely disturbing.) But even so, I find myself thinking that she will tough it out and survive childhood, as most of us do, in one form or another. Or am I being merely conventionally optimistic?

After a sort-of-tough/sort-of-sensitive centerspread diatribe by the cartoonist's alter-ego, we launch into "Queer," the story of a lesbian (ex-lesbian?) who has gotten romantically involved with a man.

The twist ending is that the man has romantic thoughts about other men. But before that we get an involving story of the woman's attempt to adjust to her new situation, both in terms of dealing with her lesbian friends (who don't know of her new relationship) and coming to terms with her own feelings. Though mildly disgusted by some of the man's actions, she is none the less enchanted by him and their love.

To me, this does not read like an examination of the "male vs. female" issue (or issues—there are many), but rather it is a look at one person's inner feelings and her attempt to find happiness and fulfillment.

Though dressed up in a rather aggressive package, I found *Naughty Bits* (or rather, the stories therein) to be sensitive, insightful, and forthright without being strident. They say that you can't tell a book by its cover and this issue is certainly one example of that.

GRADE: ★ ★ ★ ½

A problem with doing a column reviewing comics published by one's employer is what one's readers might think.

If you give a good review, then they might think that you're sucking up to your employer or maybe that some pressure had been exerted on you. If you give a not-so-good review they might think that you're bending over backwards so as *not* to seem influenced by who the publisher is.

Since it turns out that I've given both good and not-so-good reviews, I hope that this demonstrates that none of the considerations in the preceeding paragraph were in effect. Of course, I suppose that pessimists out there might think that I'm trying to play both sides of the fence. Ah well, as countless baseball umpires have said, all I can do is call 'em as I see 'em. (Come to think of it, given the "popularity" of baseball umpires, I guess that's not very encouraging, is it?) ●

Above: *Eye of Mongombo*. Below: *Naughty Bits*.

SILLY COVER

by Chas Gillen

Amazing READERS

Send your comments on AH or any comics-related topic to: Amazing Readers, 7563 Lake City Way, Seattle, WA 98115

NAME WITHHELD
ENGLAND

Privacy is meant to be Private

I would like to point out that I did not read the article that spun off the debate in the letter column of *Amazing Heroes* #195, but from your reply I think you are making a grave mistake.

If a black actor can play white parts then why shouldn't they? Its a fairly common practice on radio in this country. Similarly, if Shipp does not want to be a gay actor but an actor who is gay, then surely that is his right?

You seem to be making what seems to me an incredibly arrogant assumption that if a man (or woman) is gay then it is the be all and end all of their character. That is a stupid view of what makes a person. Being gay is one of the things that makes up Shipp's (and your) personality. One! Not all.

What you seem to be forgetting is that as far as the outside world is concerned, Shipp is an actor. He can play straight parts or gay parts. While he is acting his own sexuality is irrelevant. I no more need to know that Shipp is gay than I need to know that he enjoys tennis—it would add nothing to my enjoyment of his performance. In short, it isn't my business to know if he or you or anyone in the world is gay unless that person wishes me to know.

To shift examples slightly; Andy Mangels is to me a witty and intelligent gossip columnist. I enjoy his "Backstage" column and while needing it, I don't need to know anything about his private life (which I define as anything he doesn't want the world to know). How could it alter my reading of the column?

I also find your assertion that because I don't want to know anything about your (or anybody else's) sexual preferences then I intend to beat you up or discriminate against you incredibly insulting. Perhaps it's different in America but here straight does not mean gay basher. Gay bashers are a sick and twisted minority. To regard all those who see that another's sexuality is none of their business as gay bashers is also a fairly twisted viewpoint. Finally "They...can have children." Please! Don't attack the main basis of terrestrial biology and blame it on society. It just makes you look a fool!

Andy Mangels Responds:
Because Shipp was not given a chance (whether by the press agents who would not let me bring the subject up, DC, Warner Brothers, or Pet Fly) to comment on his homosexuality, I don't know whether Shipp is a gay actor or an actor who is gay. My point is not that gay or black actors shouldn't play straight or white roles, but that neither should be forced to hide their orientation or skin color. If a black radio actor was barred from being photographed or discussing his blackness, and was presented to the public as white, this would be seen a serious form of bigotry. Yet you think nothing of saying John's sexuality should be hidden away like a dirty secret.

Being gay is and isn't the "be all end all" of a person. If you are allowed to be open about it, there is a community, a style, circles of friends, business and social oportunities, etc. John was forced to stop going to his gay gym and told to stop going to gay restaurants. This means he was forced out of his normal lifestyle, out of his community. Gay can mean sex; more and more it means something much more political and community-minded.

I did not infer or imply that straight meant gay-bashers, only that straights do gay-bash. While there may be rows

We Ask the Marvel and DC Superhero Stars...
WHAT DOES AMERICA NEED?
by BOB KENNEDY
REPEAL THE CAPITAL GAINS TAX!
ALSO, DO SOMETHING ABOUT THOSE DAMNED UNIONS!
MO' CAYENNE PEPPA, HUM?
WE SHOULD CURB OVERDEVELOPMENT!
A NATIONAL HEALTH CARE POLICY!
CLASSIC CARS WITH HUGE TAIL FINS AND HOOD ORNAMENTS!
REBUILD THE CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE!
AND LOSE DAVID DUKE!
I'D LIKE TO SEE THE WHOLE PLACE UNDER-WATER...
BOB KENNEDY

Attitudes which say, "being gay isn't the be-all and end-all" and ask us to be polite, shut our mouths and sit in the back of the bus, are what oppresses people. . . from "witty and intelligent gossip columnists" (thank you) to TV stars, from plumbers to priests.

[Note: This letter was not addressed to "Amazing Readers." I thought that it should be printed though, and removed the writer's name in case it was not intended for publication. —TH]

JEPH LOEB
Sherman Oaks, CA

Tome of *The Unknown* Sold Her

I just wanted to drop a note and say thank you to Elizabeth Holden for her review of *Challengers of the Unknown #6* (*AH* #196) This is the second time that *Amazing Heroes* has reviewed us (March, 1991), and Tim and I really appreciate the mention.

The series will have a sequel of sorts in an upcoming issue of *Justice League Quarterly.* Seems more than a few folks were wondering how Multi-Man could have died and is still running around in *JLI & JLE.* Needless to say, we know a good story when we hear one, and so keep an eye out for "I Know You Are, But What am I." Art chores by Tim Sale, and script by me.

● *I'm really pleased you wrote us, Jeph, but at the risk of sounding like a curmudgeon, I don't think reviewers. should be thanked for good reviews. Reviews are suppposed to be honest opinions of comics, not favors or insults to writers & artists. I think Elizabeth would rather thank you for writing such an entertaining comic.*

Still, I am glad when a good review pleases a creator. I've noticed that the more negative reviews a magazine publishes, the more its good reviews impress people. —TH

RICHARD HOWELL
Leonia, NJ

A Howell Never Goofs—He Lets Editors & Typesetters Do it for Him

A few notes on the published version of my *Wonder Woman* article;

Dr. Marston's full name was *William* Moulton Marston. I checked my manuscript and it was there. I guess it got lost in typesetting somewhere.

Also, I haven't seen a screenplay for the Disney version lately, but in the original book of *101 Dalmatians,* Cruella's last name is *DeVil,* as it appears in my manuscript. She's satanic, after all, not a car.

● *Sorry, Richard. This would be a great excuse, however, to thank you again for a wonderful article. —TH*

TODD WRIGHT
Enon, Ohio

Things that make you go Hmmmmm!

Some of the things that I overhear at the comics shop I frequent:

1) The rumor that Bernie Wrightson and Al Williamson are working on a revamping of Marvel's *Devil Dinosaur.*

2) Shary Flenniken's *Trots and Bonnie* being picked up by the Arts and Entertainment Channel for 10 episodes.

3) The live-action Betty Boop movie, starring Winona Ryder, Steve Guttenberg, and Waylon Jennings, produced by Troma Pictures (God save us, if this is true).

4) A *Batman/Dr. Strange* graphic novel, done entirely by Michael Golden.

5) The systematic abolition of *all* comics in Canada (this one spooks me. Mr. Bush would have to send in the troops to rescue Dave Sim, Chester Brown, Julie Doucet, et al).

6) The spelling bee between Gary Groth and Marc Tucker, to be held in Switzerland this coming April (they're actually betting money on this one, saying it's a Fantagraphics overseas promotional idea).

I get to thinking about some of these things, and some of them are beginning to sound pretty good.

● *Your letter sparked some interesting debate, mostly over how much of it was serious and how much was made up.*

We can squelch the spelling Bee idea right now. Hmmm. Come to think of it, Gary just bought a ticket to Europe. Maybe. . . —TH

SIMON DelMONTE
Queens, NY

Why Ask Why?

Odds 'n' ends about *Amazing Heroes #197.*

First, about this month's "Perspective," Michael Sutton makes some valid, if imperfect, comparisions, except when he compares career to career. In the Beatty-Collins example, he compares a small part of Collins' career to an even smaller chunk of Beatty's career. Granted, Max Allan's work on *Dick Tracy* has been uninspired, but he has done so many other things so well, such as his Mallory novels, or *Ms. Tree,* or my favorite Collins creation, Wild Dog. Okay, *Dick Tracy* is the most noted part of his work, but it is not the end-all and be-all. As for Beatty, it's completely ludicrous to look at his one big dud and declare him just an imitator of Chester Gould. I prefer to write of Dick Tracy the film and remember Beatty as the man who brought us *Heaven Can Wait* and *Bugsy* (see it, folks!) and even *Ishtar.*

However, *Dick Tracy* the film did stink and I don't know why so many crititics liked it when they panned *Ishtar* or *Batman.*

Adam asks why super-heroes don't smile. Has he seen *Justice League?* Blue Beetle never stops smiling. Has he read the current *Legion of Super-Heroes,* where Tenzil Kem has a perpetual grin? Has he read *Flash,* where Wally always smiles about something in spite of himself and his situation? Granted, characters don't grin as much, but what's there to grin about nowadays? They just lowered New York State's bond rating again and you want any comic book published in New York to be smiley? I do agree about Lobo, however. First person who adequately explains why Lobo is so damn pop-u-lar wins my poster of Red Holtzman and Dick Barnett of the Knicks. Or not.

Thanks for explaining why Marvel has to raise its price. For once, we can't blame Tom DeFalco or even Jim Shooter. Meanwhile, I wonder where DC fits in at the Big Conglomerate. Two years later, and Time Warner hasn't sold off anything yet, so maybe there's hope that DC won't lose its lucrative, if restrictive, corporate backing. Of course, it may depend on how may more Bat-movies they can make.

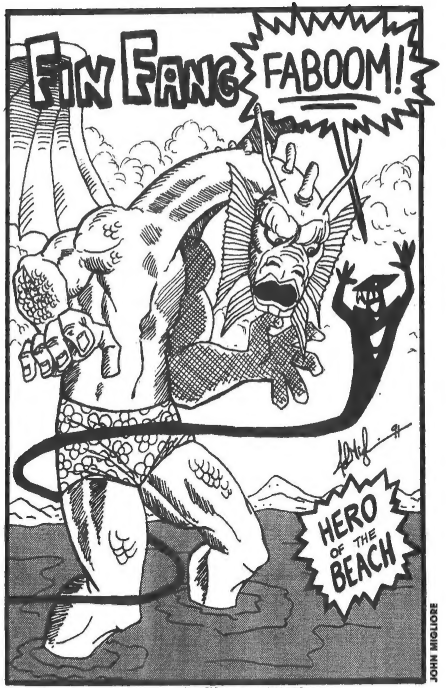
I suppose you heard that Sheldon Mayer [*Sugar & Spike*] passed away. I read this sad item in the *Daily News,* but not in the [NY] *Times.* You'd think anyone worthy of mention in the *Daily News* would be treated better by the *Times.* But I shouldn't complain; at least the Times emphasized Fred MacMurry's serious acting over his sitcom work. Nonetheless, I wonder how the Paper of Record will treat the eventual, if hopefully far-off, passing of Bob Kane of King Kirby. Sympathies to Sheldon's family, and to the loved ones of Anton Furst, who made *Batman* what it was.

Meanwhile, in Hollywood, another two Sam Hamm scripts are being rewritten. Why can't they leave his work alone? I think the only place that a second or third writer wasn't brought in was in his Bat-story in 1989. Is Andy serious? Is the Penguin running for mayor? It's already been done, in the old TV show, as the Penguin ran and fought against Batman in a broad but intriguing spoof of the 1960's politics and news reporting. But the Joker-attacks-the-museum schtick was also done in the TV show. Then, however, the museum rewarded him for improving ghastly works of modern art. As much as I liked the film and loved the scene at the Flugelheim, the scene from the TV show is among my favortie moments from the screen career of Batman.

STEVEN ROBINSON
Chicago, IL

The Broken Pencil Awards

Once again and without further ado I present the Broken Pencil Awards for the biggest foulups, screwups, and cave-ins of 1991. And the winners are:



Tom DeFalco, for busting up the Human Torch's marriage to Alicia Masters; not only that, but having it not have even have happened at all—a Skrull spy, my *ass*! Definitely *THE* Big Copout of '91.

Peter David, for not killing Madrox for *real* in *X-Factor* #71; the *other* Big Copout of '91.

Rob Liefeld, for having Deadpool rescue Black Tom Cassidy, in *X-Force* #4; still another Big Copout for '91.

Justice Society of America, 'Nuff said.

The !mpact Comics Line, 'Nuff said again.

Dan Chichester, for having Daredevil take Typhoid to a sleazy motel — right, like *they* could've gotten past the desk clerk.

Keith Giffen, for bringing back (gag)

the original Legion of Super-Heroes.

***Armageddon 2001* #2**, Hawk becomes Monarch? Dove dead? Perhaps the stupidest, most brutal DC Comics hero of all, making like a poor man's Doctor Doom? Now *I'll* bloody tell one.

Evan Dorkin, for his artwork on *Predator: Big Game*; and I thought Sam Kieth on *Aliens* bit it big time.

And Finally. . . .

Breakdowns, in *JLA/JLE*. 'Nuff said.

The "Keating Five Award for Outstanding Greed" goes to Marvel Comics for raising the price of their monthly comics; and the "Guess Who's Being Made Fun of Here?" Award goes to Grant Morrison for Crazy Jane as the Scarlet Harlot in *Doom Patrol* #47-48; at least he didn't have her *sing*.

Congratulations, people—and don't think that you haven't earned them.

● *Always a pleasure to hear from you, Mr. Robinson* —*TH*

PAUL ROGAS
California

"Backstage"—Less Horror, more Masquerades

Re: Andy Mangels

I like this column. I buy *Amazing Heroes*—mainly for *it*! I like his column as is, (News on all genre related items. . . .) which is #1. I like script reviews—it's the closest we'll get to some of (most) these projects. Interviews are okay, but I'm not a big horror fan I can read *Fangoria* or others for that! Episode guides are okay, though *Epilogue* covers this already. All in all I prefer super-hero related items. Now how about more coverage of masquerades?

ANDREW HERINGTON
Seattle, Washington

Whatever Happened to...Roy Thomas?

I grew up with Roy Thomas. The first book I read of his was *The Avengers*. Later on, I was finally able to buy the classic Neal Adams-Roy Thomas *X-Men* and I bought every issue of the *Invaders*. What can I say? I like Roy Thomas. So I am upset about DC's treatment of Roy. Now, I don't think it was malicious or intentional. It was just a sad fact of DC's sweeping continuity clean-up.

Roy Thomas took the brain-child of Gardner Fox, (a good friend of his) Earth-Two, and made it his own. Roy Thomas *was* Earth-Two and I enjoyed the stories he wrote. Then the *Crisis on Infinite Earths* happened and Earth-Two was gone. But Roy survived. He took his long-running *All-Star Squadron* and turned it into the *Young All-Stars*, and he took the Justice Society and created *Infinity Inc.* He adapted to circumstances and continued. And then there was *The Last Days of the Justice Society* and then they were gone forever. Then *Young All-Stars* was cancelled, followed by *Infinity Inc.* Then his new Sandman was eradicated and The Justice Society trivialized in *Sandman*.

So it's gone. Earth-Two is nothing more now than Power Girl and Joan Garrick. Infinity Inc., an interesting comic with great art (Todd McFarlane, Jerry Ordway) is languishing in limbo with it seems, no hope of revival. The characters themselves with a rich history are unused. But there is hope, in a recent *Green Lantern* Hal swore to rescue Alan Scott; let's hope he follows through.

It's sad really, truly sad, I don't know about Roy Thomas but I mourn their passing. Bring back the Justice Society and Infinity Inc., please.

KELLY KRANTZ

LETTERS PAGE CONTEST

I'd like people to send in a list of the top ten best super-heroes of all time. Or less than ten, if you think there aren't that many. The person most interesting response wins **$20** in Fantagraphics literature. That's right, we're raising the jackpot! Entries due by March 31, 1992.

THE CARTOONIST by T.S. WOOD
SNIFF!
SO! MR. SHREDDS! WAS YOUR MISSION SUCCESSFUL? IS DAVE DEAD? MORTALLY WOUNDED, MAYBE?
WOOD
NO... HE... HE....
WHAT?
TEMPORARILY DISABLED? WHAT?!
NO... HE... DELETED ME!!!
WHAT?
HE DELETED ME! I EXISTED—THEN I DIDN'T! IT WAS TRULY HORRIBLE! HE'S A MONSTER, I TELL YOU! DAVID STROM IS A DEVIL! THE BEYONDER REVISITED! YE GODS! HOW WILL I EVER GET OVER THE TRAUMA? HE DELETED ME!!
WELL... ...DID YOU AT LEAST SCRATCH HIM REAL BAD FIRST?!!!
HEY! GIVE HIM A BREAK WOOD! MR. SHREDDS AND I ARE JUST CARTOON CHARACTERS!
...GRUMBLE...
COME ON, WOOD! WE'RE STUCK IN A CARTOON STRIP! HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO MESS WITH A GUY IN THE REAL WORLD?
THE HORROR! THE HORROR!
WAIT A MINUTE... ...THAT'S RIGHT, HUH!
UH... ...WOOD?
DRAMATIC CLOSE UP!
I GOT A PLAN!
HE! HE! HE! HE HE!
OOH! WHAT CAN IT BE, DEAR READERS? SEE YA NEXT MONTH!

STROM'S INDEX

Occurrences of the word "pig" (you remember that old 1960's term?) in *Punisher War Journal* #37: 6

Of "Meat is Murder": 2

Of "Free El Salvador": 1

"Chances of Dave shoving his politics down our throats in one of his columns: 1 in 3"

[It's not politics, Teri. It's, uh, relevance.]

Number of different covers on *Robin II* #1: 5

On *The Sixth Garfield Treasury*: 2

Number of Multiple-Cover-Protest weeks I have seen at comic book shops: 1

Price per page of John Byrne's *2112*: 16 cents

Number of shoves Prince took to break a baseball bat in *Prince: Alter Ego*: 1

Chances of a *Strom's Index* working because it had a whole bunch of jokes, so some of them will be funny: 1 in 1

[How do you like that, Teri?]

"Chances of *The Cartoonist* having one, super high quality story line, rather than a whole bunch of piddling little jokes: 1 in 1"

[Hey! I work hard to write all those piddling little, I mean, aaaaah, nuts.]

Issue number of *Uncanny X-Men* where Jean Grey dies, again: 281

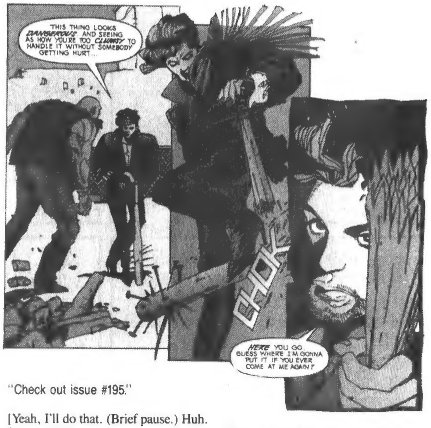
And is alive, again: 282

Issue number of *War of the Gods* where Wonder Woman is turned to clay, again: 3

And is alive, again: 4

"Chances of any *Strom's Index* being screwed up, again: 1 in 4"

[What ARE you talking about, Teri?]


THIS THING LOOKS ZAAAAPPPROP AND SERIOUS AS HOW YOU'LL BE TOO EMBARRASSED TO HANDLE IT WITHOUT SOMEBODY GETTING HURT
CHOK
HERE YOU GO. GUESS WHERE I'M GONNA PUT IT IF YOU EVER COME AT ME AGAIN?

"Check out issue #195."

[Yeah, I'll do that. (Brief pause.) Huh. So my X-Men stats are out of order in the magazine.]

"Chances of Dave Strom changing his name to Dave Screw-up: 1 in 1"

[NOW JUST A DING-DANG MINUTE!!!]

Chances of my having triple-checked that index before I mailed it: 1 in 1

Chances of me quadruple-checking it right now by buzzing up its file on the computer: 1 in 1

BUZZ.

[Hmm. The computer file is clean. Well, I'll just print it.]

PRINT.

[Hmm again. I'll think about this.]

THINK. CHANGE!!!

[Hey! The printed index text changed! I wonder who managed to infect my computer paper with an artistic, time-delay, paper virus, huh, TERI?]

[*Actually, I think that mix-up was my fault—TH*]

[Please Tom, I'm trying to escalate the feud]

"Number of stats I needed to misplace in order to make that index go straight down the toilet: 1"

"Notice how easy it was for me to do it to you, Dave? Us artists just aren't as easily screwed up as you writers."

[Well, Teri, now that you bring it up. . .]

Average ratio of the IQ of a writer to the IQ of an artist: 2:1

"WHAT?!"

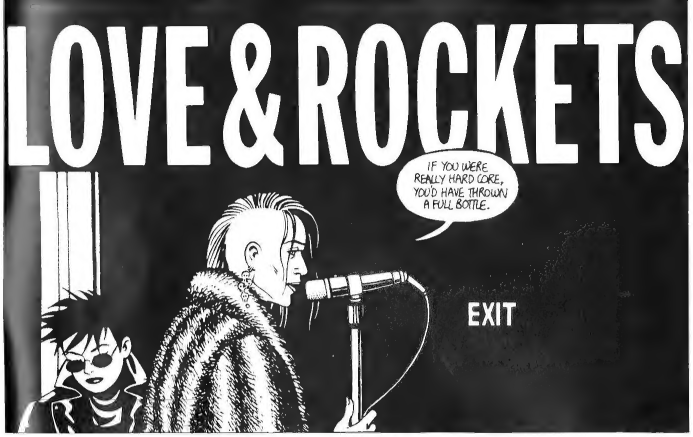
[Sure, Teri. It's very logical.]

Number of hands a writer uses to type: 2

Number of hands an artist uses to draw: 1

[Therefore, writers utilize twice the brain power for their craft.]

Chances of the above statistics being accurate, since I made them all up "while sitting on the toilet" [NOT TRUE! Only a couple]: 1 in 1000



The Comic Book

"The hippest comic on the streets today!"
NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS

"One of the proudest standard-bearers of the New Comics."
THE OBSERVER MAGAZINE

"The ground-breaking comic book of the decade."
THE FACE

"Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez combine reality and fantasy — life in the barrio and the realm of the imagination."
ROLLING STONE

"Los Bros Hernandez are muy magnifico."
SPIN

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS
CELEBRATES A
DECADE
OF LOVE (AND ROCKETS)!

IS YOUR HERNANDEZ BROS. COLLECTION COMPLETE?

Here are the latest additions to the *LOVE & ROCKETS* library:
Love & Rockets #31 through 34 - **$3.00** each *Love & Rockets* #35 and 36 - **$3.50** each

And collected volumes:
L&R Volume 7: "The Death of Speedy"
softcover: **$14.00** hardcover: **$37.00**
signed hardcover limited edition: **$42.00**

L&R Volume 8: "Blood of Palomar"
softcover: **$14.00** hardcover: **$37.00**
signed hardcover limited edition: **$42.00**

***Love & Rockets* subscriptions:**
3 issues: **$8.00** (U.S.) or **$9.50** (foreign) 6 issues: **$16.00** (U.S.) or **$18.00** (foreign)

Send all orders to: FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115. Add 15% for orders outside of the U.S. and Canada. Or order via our new 800 number (Visa/MasterCard only): 800-657-1100. Write for our free merchandise catalog featuring *L&R* goodies!

name
address
city state zip

YOU ASKED FOR 'EM...
YOU GOT 'EM!

Fantagraphics Books is proud to present the Christmas gift of choice for any Usagi Yojimbo fan: The official USAGI YOJIMBO T-SHIRT! Two brand new designs, both rendered by Usagi creator Stan Sakai, both painstakingly silkscreened by hand, in full color, onto the finest 100% cotton T-shirts on the market — available right now, *only* by mail from the publisher (that's us)!

Both are available in Small, Medium, Large, and Extra Large. "Usagi in Armor" shirts are six colors on gray; "Usagi and Tomoe" shirts are six colors on white.

Call or mail in your order today — and be the envy of your friends when you show them your splendid new Usagi formalwear!

Yes! Send me the following T-shirts:

____ USAGI SOLO SMALL
____ USAGI SOLO MEDIUM
____ USAGI SOLO LARGE
____ USAGI SOLO XTRA LARGE
____ USAGI & TOMOE SMALL
____ USAGI & TOMOE MEDIUM
____ USAGI & TOMOE LARGE
____ USAGI & TOMOE XTRA LARGE

name _____

address _____

city _____

state _____ zip _____

All shirts are $15.95. Please enclose $3.00 for shipping and handling with each order. Check or money order only — or call in your credit card order toll free at 800-657-1100 (VISA and MASTERCARD only). Send to: FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS, 7563 Lake City Way, Seattle WA 98115.

USAGI YOJIMBO is © and TM Stan Sakai